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The Onyx Bludgeon

-:- Or -:-

At Death Grips

By George Knapp

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CHAPTER I.

SENT TO THE OZARKS.

"THE task will be difficult." The speaker was a man, whose iron-gray hair betrayed his advancing years. He addressed a youth of more than average stature, of slender yet muscular build.

"I am not afraid of that, sir," replied the young man, smiling.

"I know it," returned the elder. "That is why I selected you for this assignment. You did some mighty good work, Errold, in rounding up that bunch of moonshining saloon-keepers, in Peoria. We are all proud of the way you located the stills in the cellars of that set of saloons. I don't mind saying that you solved the case after several of the older hands in the revenue service had been baffled by it."

"It was all in the day's work, sir," said the youth.

"I'm glad you feel that way about it," retorted the older man, a trifle grimly. "You will find that the men you will deal with on the new case are of a different stamp. This is no crowd of grafting saloonkeepers, but a real set of desperadoes. In fact, the reason you are being sent down is that Walker of St. Louis, the best man in the district, was killed some months ago in the Ozarks. Of course, nobody could be caught. The point is that the men in the Missouri district are known and would all be recognized. That would mean that they would share poor Walker's fate."

Errold Le Prinz nodded understandingly.

"They want somebody from the outside who wouldn't be suspected; is that it?"

"Exactly. Cornell asked me for my best man. I don't want to flatter you, but I think you can stand the compliment."

"And my instructions?" queried the young revenue officer.

"You will leave tonight at 11:50 for St. Louis. Report there to Cornell, giving him your credentials and getting such advice or further instructions from him as he may wish to give." The chief fluttered rapidly thru the leaves of a railway guide, and then continued:

"Tomorrow afternoon at 3:15 you take a local train for Crocker, where you will take some sort of automobile or livery conveyance for Waynesville. From there your journey will have to be made afoot. South of Waynesville you will strike what is known as the Ozark

trail. Somewhere on that trail you will find the cleverest and most desperate gang of moonshiners that ever cheated the Government. The rest is up to you."

The young man squared his shoulders resolutely.

"I will do my best, sir," he assured his chief.

"I am sure of it," replied the latter, heartily, extending his hand and grasping Errold's. "Good luck to you, my boy."

As Errold left the Federal building he seemed to be walking on air. His elation was to be pardoned, inasmuch as he was one of the youngest men in the revenue service, and had just been assigned to the Government's most important case.

"I'll show them," he told himself, with an involuntary tightening of his big shoulder muscles.

Perhaps, had he foreseen what would befall, he might not have felt so confident. As it was, he swung briskly aboard a street car which carried him to the cheerful little apartment on the South Side where he and his widowed mother dwelt.

"I'm afraid I will have to leave you for a while, dear," he told his mother. "I'm to go down to the Ozarks. I'll not be gone long, but I'll have to start tonight, so I'd better get at my packing."

His mother's eyes dimmed with an unnamed fear.

"Errold, you'll be careful, won't you?" she queried anxiously.

"Yes, mother," the young man assured her.

"And you won't let them hurt you, my boy?"

"Not if I can see them first."

"God bless you, Errold. You're the best son a mother ever had to gladden her old age."

The young man stooped swiftly and kissed the wrinkled face.

"Don't you worry about me, mother dear," he said gayly. "Come and help me pack."

CHAPTER II.

AILEEN TEMPORIZES.

POP RYDON and his wife were the proudest parents in Dent County when their daughter, Aileen, was appointed teacher of the Stony Point district school. True, it had taken some persuasion on the part of Aileen to bring her father's point of view around to this. At first he had insisted that she complete her course at the university.

Aileen never confessed to her parents how much she wanted to continue her studies at the college where her successes had been so great, both in her studies and in athletics. She was specializing in chemistry, and was regarded as [illegible] promising scholars in the [illegible]ent. As for athletics, the girls who formed the greater part of the feminine portion of the university student body, could not hope to compete with this slim young girl from the out-of-doors country.

It was at the close of her second year at the university that Aileen learned accidentally that her father had mortgaged his little farm in order to raise the money to keep her in school. That very day she wrote out her application to the directors of the Stony Point District, asking that she be considered a candidate for the position of teacher.

"I shall first earn enough money to help you pay off this mortgage, Pop," she told her father. "After that, if I wish to continue my studies, it will be with my own money."

Pop objected bitterly to the arrangement at first.

"A man don't amount to nothin' these days," he complained, "lessen' he eddicates his children. As long as I got my health, there ain't no need for you to work."

But in the end he yielded. His charming daughter's plea that she earn her own way thru life hurt the old man's pride, because his was the stern spirit of the true mountaineer whose principles come to be as steadfast as the rocky hills where they are formed. His title to the few acres about his stanch log cabin were in real danger, however, and it terrified him a little to see the work of a lifetime fading into the substance of a dream. His daughter's earnings as a schoolteacher meant a great deal to the Rydon family just then, and Pop finally consented that she go to work. When the directors of the Stony Point School informed the girl that she was their choice to guide the seventy-odd pupils thru the mazes of reading, writing and arithmetic, Pop was delighted.

The only one dissatisfied with the arrangement was Daniel Craig Batchelor, the holder of the mortgage on the Rydon farm. It was little enough that he cared about the money which the paper represented, tho he was reputed to be one of the most avaricious men in the Ozarks, as had been his father before him. In this case, however, Batchelor's greed was for power and not for gold. It was no more a part of his plan that the mortgage should be paid than that Aileen should be independent. He turned the matter over in his mind as he drove toward the Stony Point School, where Aileen was even then dismissing the pupils after her first day's work.

The rig he drove was the smartest in all the region about. This was no more than it should have been, for Daniel was said even by his enemies—and they were many—to be a remarkably successful young man.

Rich, powerful, and undeniably handsome, what young woman but would not feel flattered to receive his attentions. He presented a dashing picture to Aileen, as he wheeled rapidly into the lane which led up to the school yard, and sprang nimbly from his rig.

Aileen, who had turned to secure the door of the schoolhouse, looked up quickly, and smiled in recognition.

"Why, how do you do, Dan," she greeted. "What brings such a very busy and important person to the schoolhouse at this hour?"

"I was just driving by this way on business, and thinking I might be able to give you a lift in the buggy, I drove up to see if you were still here. I guess this is my lucky day," answered Batchelor, his dark eyes gleaming into hers.

Aileen's eyes dropped before his burning gaze.

"I'm sure it's very good of you to say so, Dan," she said in a low voice. "You know I don't like compliments, tho."

"The truth's the truth," he answered gayly. "However, if you'd rather have it that way, this is my unlucky day. There—is that better?"

Aileen laughed lightly.

"Nobody could possibly object to it on the ground that it was a compliment," she said blithely. "Under those circumstances I shall be delighted to accept your invitation to drive me home."

Gracefully and lightly she stepped into the rig, before Batchelor's readily proffered arm could be raised to her assistance. The young man jumped in beside her, and sent the mare smartly down the lane to the road. Here he slowed the pace of his mare, and turned to his companion.

Being brusque of speech, and imbued with a confidence gained by his short lifetime of continuous successes in all he had undertaken, Batchelor plunged directly into the subject, to discuss which had been his real purpose in coming to the school house.

His opening remark was characteristic.

"I bought the old Winton place today, down in the Big Piney bottoms," he observed. "That makes sixteen hundred acres I'll be payin' taxes on next year, and there's no plaster on an acre of it."

Aileen crimsoned at the reference to the mortgage on her father's little farm, but she spoke up bravely enough.

"Oh, that's just splendid, Dan," she said. "Now won't be much else left for you to get soon."

"But there is something else I want very much," returned Batchelor, turning to the lovely girl beside him, "and that's a wife to help me run the place."

Aileen was startled. The influence he had exerted over others was powerful indeed, but it manifested itself over her. His dark eyes seemed almost to burn, so intently did he gaze at her, so meaning was his glance. There could be no doubt as to what his words portended. The passion in that look conveyed to the girl clearly enough that he was proposing to her. Try as she might to keep her head clear, she became confused as she lowered her eyes.

"Aileen," he asked, "will you be my wife?"

The words seemed to strike the girl dumb. She did not answer. She could not.

"Why—wh—Dan," she finally stammered. The young man's eyes were fixed upon her, however, and he seemed to be demanding an answer at once. Aileen's thoughts turned to her home. There she knew her old father was fighting the battle of pride. He was hoping against hope that Batchelor would not foreclose the mortgage upon the farm he had worked a lifetime to obtain. He was praying that her slender wages as a schoolmistress might tide over the interest payments, and that the man by her side would grant an extension on the time the gross amount must be paid. But Batchelor had never been noted for his tenderness to people who owed him money, and it hardly seemed possible to expect leniency of him.

Furthermore, here was a man who could give the woman of his choice the luxuries which every woman demands as payment for wifehood. He was wealthy and handsome. There was a certain dash and power about him that drew the members of her sex toward him. And yet—and yet she was the doubt that he would treat her in a different manner from that in which most husbands in this rock country treated their wives; that he would not force her to serve him and his hired men with food at table and eat later by herself. It was all so uncertain, her future.

But the thought of her father and his sorry financial plight came back to the girl with redoubled force. Tears of pity for him came to her eyes and her heart melted. She suddenly made her decision.

"Dan," she said firmly, even crisply, "you want your answer now. I ac——"

The sentence was never finished, for just then the spirited mare jumped sideways and began to run. The buggy, the wheels of which had been rolling perilously close to the edge of a small gully, lurched and almost overturned. The two left wheels went over the side and, with the mare running, the trap was in imminent danger of toppling.

Aileen held her breath and clutched the side bars. Batchelor, who had allowed the reins to hang loose, made a desperate attempt to grasp them and fumbled. The flying feet of the terrified horse sent a stream of pebbles clattering back against the dashboard. It seemed to the girl as tho they were running over the edge of an abyss and that no power could stop them.

Batchelor grabbed again, and this time he caught the right line of the harness. With a mighty tug he fairly dragged the mare at right angles to the course she had been taking, and headed her toward the opposite side of the road. The buggy almost fell over, stood on two wheels for an instant, and finally righted itself.

Gaining control of the reins, Batchelor muttered a curse. Black anger flashed from his dark eyes and his lips curled in a cruel rage.

"D—n you!" he cried, bringing his heavy whip down on the spirited animal's back with a swish and a crack. "You will run away with me, will you?"

He was about to bring the whip down again when Aileen intervened.

"Whipping her won't do any good, will it?" she asked, laying her hand on his upraised arm, "and besides, almost anybody would be frightened to see Corny Goggin's head come popping out of the bushes that way."

"So that's who it was, was it? Everything happened so quick I couldn't notice. I'll settle accounts with him, at all events."

The sudden spurt which had come from the mare's violent shying had so accelerated the pace that at this point they drew up before the gate of the Rydon place. Four or five dogs greeted the arriving buggy with a furious chorus of barks, which drew Pop Rydon from the house to see who the newcomers might be.

"Howdy, Dan?" the old farmer exclaimed. "Wasn't lookin' fer to see you today. Won't ye come in an set fer a while?"

But Batchelor was in no mood for social visits.

"Reckon I won't have time, Mr. Rydon," he replied. "I was just passin' when I picked Miss Aileen up and gave her a lift this far." He turned to the girl. "I pass by the school house a right smart at that time o' day," he remarked carelessly. "I may be along tomorrow, and that'll give us a chance to finish our talk."

He cracked the whip and drove smartly away.

CHAPTER III.

THE FALL AT EAGLE SINK.

ON THE following afternoon Aileen dismissed school half an hour early. She knew Batchelor intended to call for his answer, and she had not yet decided what answer she intended to give. To avoid meeting him and putting off his impetuous suit, she left the schoolhouse before he could be expected to arrive, and set off rapidly along a back trail thru the woods.

She knew she liked Daniel as well, if not better, than any other young man she had ever met. And yet—and yet—could this liking be love? This was the question that tortured her. She had always imagined that love was something bigger than the temperate liking that she felt for Daniel Batchelor. She had thought of love as a consuming fire which waxed, even as it consumed. And yet, always in the background of her thought, like a black cloud on the horizon of an otherwise sunny sky, there lay the mortgage.

Communing thus, Aileen passed rapidly up a bowsider-strewn draw, which terminated at the steep face of a bluff. Only a hill-dweller could so surely and certainly have threaded her way up the incline, paved as it was with loose bowlders which at every step threatened to slip out from under foot. High up in the face of the cliff was a shallow cave which was her objective point. It had been her favorite retreat as a girl. Often she had played house there; many times she had pictured this as a castle, from which she, as queen, ruled all the surrounding country. It was here that she could think most clearly, if hard, clear thought were needed; and now that the climax of her life seemed at hand, she wished to be there to predetermine, as far as any girl might, the quality of the weather ahead.

She climbed with such ease and skill, and the ascent was so familiar to her, that her mind turned to the knotty problem presented to her by Batchelor's proposal, even as she went up, almost hand over hand, by means of tiny crevices, ledges or twisted shrub roots.

"It means life itself to Pop," was the thought that repeated itself in her mind, "and Dan is rather a nice boy, except——" and now came flashing back to her the sight of the wanton cruelty on the face of the young farmer when Cornelius Goggin, one of the neighbor's boys, frightened the mare by suddenly obtruding his vacuous, oafiike face thru the bushes at the roadside.

Threading her way around a perilously narrow ledge, Aileen reached up for the last familiar handhold, a little dogwood shrub which grew at an angle of thirty degrees from a sand-filled crack in the red stone face of the cliff. As she grasped the bush close to the rock, with one hand, and was about to put her weight upon it for the last swing to her little nest, she looked upward at the edge of the bluff.

The girl was never more startled in her life than by what she saw above her. For hanging over the edge of the cliff, the blood surging into his face, was the upper portion of the body of a man. The red sandstone appeared to be crumbling under him, making his position one of imminent peril. Not thinking to cry out to him, Aileen determined to put her muscles to their supreme test.

With a surge that strained to the breaking point the little dogwood shrub, Aileen swung herself into her aerie. Here she stood upright for one brief, tense second, and then, with all the strength of her lithe young body, she leaped forward. She leaped not blindly, but as one born to the hills and reared amid their fastnesses, whose nerves and muscles were schooled to meet emergencies. At the height of her spring, she seized a slightly projecting vertical ledge, her momentum, thus impeded, swinging her against the cliff, where, with a last and almost superhuman lunge, she managed to reach the stump of what had once been a stunted cliff cedar.

There she hung for a moment, bracing her weight as only a hill-dweller could, against the slanting face of the bluff. With her right hand clasped about the cedar stump, she released her left, which she also bent about the scant hold she had found. Then, with all her might, she drew herself up until she could rest one foot in a crevice which was all but concealed by leafy vines.

The man above, startled by this sudden vision beneath him, was too much occupied in trying to regain his own footing, to pay the tribute to such skill and daring which he otherwise might have paid. He could not think how this apparition came beneath him, for the treacherous, crumbling rock was causing him to slip, with gradually increasing speed, toward the spot where Aileen now stood, firmly braced, directly beneath. In vain he sought to stem the sinister, sliding movement, which, at any moment might precipitate him to the depths below. Alas, he could not withhold himself, and his body slid over the edge toward what seemed inevitable death on the rocks beneath.

Blindly the girl reached out her strong young hand with a desperate clutch. The body of the man had not fallen more than two feet, or it would have swept her downward with it. As it was, she could not hope to stop the man altogether. It was only the last blind impulse of a heroic spirit that prompted her to make the final attempt to save the life of one she did not know. Her one brief glance at him had shown him to be a stranger, but that weighed not at all with Aileen.

Her outstretched hand came in contact with a leathern holster attached to the man's wrist. With her other hand she was clutching the vines growing out of a crevice. She was braced too firmly to be dislodged herself, but strong as were her fingers, they could not hold the body of that heavy man pendent at the end of a strap. Her efforts succeeded in swinging him closer to the face of the bluff, as the holster strap was torn out of her fingers. Such a terrific turn did it give to her wrist, that it seemed to her that the member was broken. The luckless man fell on.

Yet was there one faint hope vouchsafed him—the cedar stump. He would have passed beyond it had not the girl swung him inward. But the leathern holster, brushing by the stump, caught on its splintered top—and held, for the time being, at least. The girl, Spartan to the last, her wrist paining her terribly, made the descent to the stump and just beneath it, to her shallow cave. Afterward, she could not tell how she did it, the operation seemed so like a nightmare to her, but when the splinter to which the holster was caught gave way, she managed to drag the senseless form inward once again, so that it fell

DON'T let "THE ONYX BLUDGEON; or, AT DEATH GRIPS," escape you, in this issue. It is a real thriller. Look out for "THE BELLWETHER," and "THE SIX CORNERS BOY; or, STRIKE FOR FREEDOM," in next week's Ledger. Watch for the Ledger of October 6. It will surprise you.

with a thud on her ledge, where she pulled it back to safety.

Having proved herself more courageous than a man in her nimble heroism, she now became a woman when the danger had for the moment abated. She fainted dead away beside the recumbent form of the man she had rescued. He, unconscious of what had happened after the tearing wrench of the first retarding in his fall, began to show signs of life.

CHAPTER IV.

THRU RUSHING WATERS.

"WITH a knapsack on my shoulder I bid you all farewell," hummed Errold to himself as he strode away from the hotel at Waynesville, while its occupants stared at him, open-mouthed. Swinging down one of the village streets to the Robideaux River, the young man passed a large, bubbling spring and strode steadily on down the valley. Occasionally he paused to admire the distant pink flush of a Judas-tree in full bloom. Once he stopped to pluck a huge, odorless glade-pansy, which he placed jauntily in the buttonhole of his coat lapel.

Mile after mile he placed behind him with the tireless, effortless stride of a born athlete. With the first ascent of the mountain heights which, in the morning, had seemed to form a distant blue barrier, shutting off, apparently, the valley of the river, he left the rushing waters of the Robideaux and struck east and a little south toward the point where he had been told he would cross the Ozark trail.

Far inland he struck a lonely cabin, perched in the midst of a desolate, rocky field. He stopped here, and asked if he might purchase some food. The crone who had answered the summons of a yelping yellow dog which had announced Errold's approach to the cabin, curtly refused.

"We've done et," she informed him in a tired, flat voice. "My fire's gone out, too. I jus' cain't stop now to build a fresh fire and make more bread.'

"Pray don't trouble, then," Errold answered. "Perhaps I might have a glass of water?"

"Sure," replied the crone, fetching a bucket and dipper. "Take all ye want."

From his study of his map, Errold knew that he would strike the old Ozark trail just beyond the Big Piney River. From the woman he learned that this river was but seven miles farther east, and was most directly reached by the road along which Errold had been traveling.

As he left the lonely cabin Errold congratulated himself upon his foresight in having placed some sandwiches in his knapsack that morning, before leaving the little hotel at Waynesville. Dry as they were, he consumed them with great relish, while sitting on a fallen log at the edge of the woods which bordered the road.

He was in no mood for delay, however, since he wished to push on as rapidly as possible to the Big Piney, in order to reach the territory where his work would begin. Therefore he stopped no longer for lunch than was absolutely necessary, and took the road briskly in the direction of the river.

The silent forests which clothed the somber hills that surrounded him on all sides contrasted unpleasantly with the smiling valley he had quitted that morning. The farther on he strode, the more rough and forbidding the landscape seemed to become. The road which, farther back, had been graded and kept in good condition, was now little more than a wagon-trail, deeply rutted in some spots, and so bowlder-strewn in others as not to resemble a road at all.

Errold increased the speed of his walk. He was more than anxious to have this part of his journey done. The road wound among the rugged hills, their scarred slopes seeming to mock him.

"How can anything you do affect us?" they seemed constantly to be calling to him. "Look at our forests—they were standing here hundreds of years before you were born, and will still be standing here hundreds of years after you are gone."

A sense of oppression from the somber forests deepened in him, and he hurried that he might the sooner descend into the valley of the Big Piney River. It was with a feeling of distinct relief that he finally topped the last ridge and saw, winding thru the plain far below him, the swollen current of the stream. As far as the eye could reach there were no bridges. Errold laughed happily.

"Roughing it is right!" he exclaimed to a solemn pine which reared its feathered top far above. "This seems to be the spot where little Errold swims. Wish I were web-footed." Altho this prospect would have daunted a less hardy youth, the young man minded it not at all. Undressing and strapping his clothes into his waterproof knapsack, he walked boldly into the slowly moving backwater to the edge of the current.

The stream, viewed from land, was deceptive. It did not seem to go rapidly. It was only after he was shoulder deep in the water that Errold noticed how swiftly the chips and bits of driftwood flashed past.

Undismayed, however, Errold plunged boldly into the rushing stream. His intended landing point on the other side was an old sycamore tree, whose spreading roots projected into the water and seemed to afford an excellent place to crawl out without muddying his feet.

But before he knew it Errold was swept past the aged tree. Only then did he realize the power of the water. He gave up trying to swim directly across the river, and contented himself with edging his way across gradually. He was swimming strongly and glorying in his ability to cope with the river. Now and then he glanced up to see the trees on the banks flash by him. Almost a half mile of bank had gone by in this fashion, and Errold was barely halfway across when he felt a gradual dragging on his shoulders.

"That sack seems to be getting heavier," he said to himself. "I suppose it's like a suitcase after one has carried it a while. It gains about five pounds in weight for each additional block."

Still, he managed to keep to his long, diagonal course across the river. He had been swimming a powerful breast stroke in order that the sack might not be submerged. Only the bottom of it trailed in the water. Redoubling his efforts, the young man attempted to cut his way more quickly into shore, but now he found that his head was being shoved under water by the weight. By the feel of the sack he could tell that it had filled with water. This meant that he was struggling to swim in a rushing stream that only the hardiest of men would have tackled without encumbrance, but which he was trying to cross with a burden of almost one hundred pounds upon his shoulders.

He knew it to be a keg.

With a powerful surge, he lifted his head clear of the swirling torrent and gulped a deep breath of the clean, sweet, wholesome air. He knew that he was in for a life-and-death fight with the relentless current. Thrusting away the water with heavy, even strokes, he breasted the stream, struggling to cover the distance which separated him from the friendly, beckoning shore by what would practically be an under water swim. But the weight at his shoulders seemed to be dragging him down, as with clutching talons. He could tell by the feel of the current that the force of the river had swung him downstream and that he was no longer heading for shore.

With his lungs almost at the bursting point, he sought desperately to free his head for another breath of air. But with almost sentient malice the leaden burden on his shoulders pressed him deep into the water. Unable to stand the terrific strain, with a crashing roar in his ears and with his heart beating like a trip hammer in his bosom, he began to exhale. It was the beginning of the end; with the air gone from his lungs, he knew that the next involuntary expansion of his great chest would fill his lungs with water. His struggles became weaker. After all, what was the use of struggling? He was tired, and it would feel good to rest. Why not draw the water into his lungs and end it all quickly?

At this instant a hard object, borne upon the rushing current, struck his side. Instinctively, and without conscious reasoning, he flung his left arm over it. Instead of bearing it down, he found that it carried his weight easily, but his brain, clouded by the fearful strain, was unable to grasp this fact. The object itself seemed suddenly to roll in the current, and as the fingers of his left hand were firmly clutched on a hard rim; the roll carried his head and shoulders up out of the water and into the air once more. With a gurgling gasp he forced out the water which had got into his windpipe, and hung weakly to the provident support.

He was soon able to breathe, but the strain had proved so great that he could make but feeble progress to the opposite shore. Finally, however, a great swirl in the water spun him around and luckily shot him out on a tangent directed to the side of the river where he desired to land. At this juncture his feet dragged against bottom, and with an almost superhuman effort he stood upright, still clinging to the object which had supported him. He now knew it to be a small barrel or keg. He walked slowly and painfully thru the shallow water, dragging it after him. When he reached shore, he was glad to throw himself upon the ground and rest for a few moments until he regained sufficient strength to take up his journey. He unloosened his knapsack and examined it. A minute inspection brought to him the discovery that a small hole in the bottom had been responsible for the contents becoming soaked with water when he was in midstream.

"Must have punctured it with a thorn on the other side," he thought.

Laying out the things to dry, Errold lay down again and closed his eyes until the feeling of lassitude in his overtaxed muscles began to give place to his wonted energy. He opened his eyes to take a leisurely survey of his surroundings. The first thing his glance rested upon was that Heaven-sent life preserver.

It was a small keg. Errold sought to raise it on end, and to his intense surprise found that the keg was quite heavy. He gazed at it curiously for a few moments, gave a low whistle, and stepped aside a few paces to pick up a heavy bowlder. Using this as a mallet, it was the work of but a moment to knock loose the peg which fitted tightly into the bunghole of the small barrel. At once there poured from the receptacle a flood of clear, white liquid, which gave off the unmistakable, pungent odor of alcohol.

Wetting a finger in the flowing liquor, Errold tasted it, and at once realized that his nearness to drowning had been a blessing in disguise, for this fortunate chance had thrown into his way a most important clew bearing upon the real mission which had sent him to the Ozarks. He allowed the keg to empty itself on the gravel beach, rolled it to the edge of the bluff, and concealed it carefully in the shrubby undergrowth. He marked the spot with a peculiarly shaped mound of small stones, in order to be sure of being able to locate it again.

Eager to be on his way, he donned his clothes, which were but partially dry, and looked about for the best way up from the river. He saw at once that it would be necessary to scale the cliff which faced the little gravel beach, if he wished to proceed straight inland. To avoid this, he struck out down the beach, to the nearest open point in the bluff wall which hemmed in the stream. Here he found a well-defined pathway leading in a winding fashion to the upland country east of the river.

With some anxiety he found himself apparently on some densely wooded plateau or table-land. As he neared the spot where the absence of trees assured him of a good outlook, he noted a fallen log crossing his path. Leaping nimbly over it, he landed on a loose bowlder, turned his foot, twisted sidewise and fell. His fall brought him down heavily on a little stony slope, down which he rolled several yards before he could make an effort to arrest his flight.

And then, just as he was about to stop, the upper portion of his body slid out over nothingness. Horrified by the prospect of a fall which meant certain death, he braced his muscles, striving with might and main to hold himself back. But to no purpose. The treacherous stones slipped beneath him and added to the impetus his body had received from his fall. As he felt himself slip over the edge into the abyss, his last conscious thought was of his mother. Then the world went out in blackness.

This interesting story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you but little, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

"OVER THE TOP WI' SCOTTY."

"Say, brother, how would you like to go
Over the top wi' Scotty?"
"I'd like to charge with my gun held low
Into the face of the sullen foe;
I'd give the rest of my years to go
Over the top wi' Scotty!"

"Say, brother, how would you like the life
Down in the trench wi' Scotty?"
"I'd follow the pipes and the drum and fife,
Into the heart of the war and strife;
The finest kind of a fighting life
Helping the French wi' Scotty."

"But what if you or your comrades fell
Fighting the Huns wi' Scotty?"
"Firmly facing each Teuton shell,
Every one of us taking hell,
What would it matter if I fell
Facing their guns wi' Scotty?"

"What if you heard the bugle bray
To fight the fight wi' Scotty?"
"We'd give a cheer and we'd dash away
Over the top to join the fray,
A thrust—a shout, and we'd win the day,
And save the right wi' Scotty!"
—George P. Lewis.

* * *

A Daisy.

Senator Chauncey M. Depew is famous as an after dinner speaker. Well, here is a Depew story. In the course of a few remarks at a fashionable dinner he told how a certain manufacturer, left practically alone in his factory thru a lockout, was represented as pointing to the office clock over his desk and saying to his friend:

"There are only two hands in my office that never strike."

"Whereupon," said the Senator, "the clock struck 2 (too)."

After the dinner one of Senator Depew's friends came up and congratulated him.

"Your speech was great," he said. "That story about the clock is a daisy."

The Senator beamed. "I think it is pretty good," he said modestly.

About five minutes later another friend came up who was not so eulogistic.

"Chauncey," he said, "I think that story about the clock better every time I hear it. I think tonight was the fiftieth time."

"Why, Mr. Newall says that story is a daisy," expostulated Mr. Depew.

The other laughed. "You ought to study botany, Chauncey, and you would learn that a daisy is a hardy annual."

And thereupon the Senator subsided.

HER DUAL LIFE

-:- Or -:-

The Hidden Lodge

By Ella Martin

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CHAPTER IV.

MR. TENNANT.

IMMEDIATELY the words of the child, Theresa, when speaking of her stepmother came to Helen. When asked if her hair was glossy, she had replied: "No, it is dull." And here, within a few feet of her, was a woman with dull gold hair, such as Mrs. Tennant was said to possess. And the woman was none other than Beryl Stanhope, Richard Dallas' old sweetheart. So this was what had become of her! While Dick was searching patiently, she had run across her accidentally. And she did not know where Dick was, or how to go about finding him.

Helen knew that Beryl had not seen her, and feared to make a move lest she should frighten her. Still she would be more startled if she should come upon her in the shadows unexpectedly, and it was clear to Helen that she was seeking the rustic seat beneath the tree's sheltering branches.

Helen started to her feet, but at that moment the white-robed figure paused and gazed about her in a bewildered manner. Then, of a sudden, she lifted her eyes and gazed, still bewilderedly, at the nurse shrinking away from her against the tree. Seeing she was discovered, Helen leaned toward her and whispered her name.

"Beryl!"

There was no answer, and a feeling of awe crept over her. For this one-time friend seemed to be nearer heaven than earth. No wonder Mr. Tennant and the child had called her an angel. So wan and white she looked in her clinging white gown, and yet her beauty of other days was enchanced by her delicacy.

"Beryl," said Helen, "don't you know me?" And Beryl looked with recognition, but without surprise, straight into her friend's eager eyes.

"Helen, I am glad you have come," she said, but without enthusiasm. "I see you are the child's nurse."

Helen grasped the two frail hands in her own and drew her to a seat beside her. "Beryl, what has changed you so?" she cried. "You are Mrs. Tennant, the mistress of this mansion!"

"Yes, and no. Oh, I cannot tell you—I cannot explain! Only the real mistress here is the tall woman, who affects regal attire every day, and sometimes wears ermine. It is all so futile, the. She has not, and never can, gain her heart's desire. And she is growing old trying."

"You are referring to Miss Cole?"

Beryl shivered slightly; but not from a chill in the air, for there was none.

"That is what she calls herself; but the name does not seem to suit her. She came into his life long before I knew him, and was here when I came. I supposed she was his housekeeper. Now I know differently. She is a leech—a vampire, absorbing the vitality of those about her, tho in what manner I do not know, and I am powerless to prevent it. One thing I am certain of, she is sucking the very life blood of us all. Beware of her Helen, and do not succumb to her influence."

"I thought," ventured Helen, "that it was Mr. Tennant who possessed the influence."

"Yes, but that is only second-handed, and she is the controlling power. She wills and he obeys."

"I see. And I'm glad I came here, Beryl. I am glad I found you. You are between two fires, if ever a woman was. You will die if you do not exert yourself. You will be done to death if you do. Leave all to me, and I will manage to save you. You must feign illness immediately—before you have partaken of another meal, and I will have you brought to my apartments and will prepare everything for you with my own hands."

"Helen, you do not think——"

"I am taking no chances. I am a nurse, and know that your transparent skin and blue-veined temples are due to slow arsenic poisoning. Your inertia is the result of being almost continually in a partial hypnotic state. Neither your husband nor Rose Cole should be allowed to come near you."

Beryl looked startled, but her listless condition rendered her incapable of strong feeling. However, she murmured earnestly:

"God must have guided you to me. I felt utterly forsaken."

"There is one thing I would like to know, Beryl, and it is some of my business; for Dick Dallas was as near my ideal as a man could be. But I kept my preference for him in the background on your account. Why did you desert him for a man of whom you knew but little, and who does not protect you from this vampire woman, after your sacrifice for his sake?"

"I do not know, Helen. I have often wondered, for I love Dick as much as ever. I do not love Maurice Tennant. But I cannot escape the fate I have brought upon myself. There is no way out of it now. I am so helpless in the matter. And I was utterly friendless until you came. Your very presence dear, makes me feel like a different being. Your are so self-reliant, you would never have accepted your fate so meekly."

"In your place, Beryl, I should have brought about a change in affairs, if in so doing I had brought ruin down upon the heads of those two arch-plotters. They have deserved nothing else at your hands."

"I never thought of rebelling. I have no spirit any more—that vampire has sapped my strength of will as well as of the body."

"Which vampire?" demanded Helen.

Beryl was silent, and the nurse was not sure that she understood.

"There are two," she explained. "But for that you would have succumbed entirely before this time. They are not agreed, it seems, and their wills clash. Do you understand me? Or are you still in ignorance of the hypnotic power your husband holds over you—a power instigated by the tall woman who has him under her control? He wants you to live, that he may keep you on a pedestal to worship. She would have you out of the way, that she may win back the love she believes she once possessed."

"I believe you are right, Helen, in all you say. I know now that he used hypnotism to get me into his clutches. I have never been myself since I met him. I have no energy or strength of will. I scarcely know what impulse brought me out here tonight. I seldom leave the house."

"That is one thing that ails you. Such a colorless life would shrivel the most dauntless spirit on earth. It is killing both you and the child."

Beryl drew a long sigh. "Poor Theresa!" she said. "Her life is blasted. There is nothing in the future for her, even if she lives, I fear. But somehow, Helen, I feel that her death would bring just a change in my own life. Her father might be able to break loose from his present mode of living, then. And perhaps he would free me from my fetters."

Helen started and glanced down at the despondent figure by her side. But the shadows hid the face of her friend, and she could not divine her meaning exactly. Rose Cole had insinuated that Theresa was not safe because of her stepmother, but Helen had not known then who the stepmother was. She did not doubt Beryl in the least; but she began to wonder if Miss Cole was not using the power of suggestion to control the wife's actions as well as her husband's in an effort to bring about harm to Theresa, whom she wanted to dispose of in a way that it could be laid at Beryl's door. She must be on the alert from this on, if she would avert a tragedy.

"What makes you think he would release you? You are married to him and he loves you."

"Love!" echoed Beryl. "It is hardly that. He calls his attraction for me a spiritual love. But to quote his own words, there was only one, Theresa's mother, who combined all the qualities he admired, and which completed his requirements in a spiritual and material love. Do you know that I am his wife in name only—that never since he married me has he even touched my hand, lest he should desecrate the love that was wholly of the soul?"

Helen was surprised, and therefore silent for a space. Then she laughed. "How thankful you must be that you are merely an idol to be worshiped, since you do not love him," she observed.

"Yes, it is the one thing that makes my position as his wife bearable, I do not love him, nor even admire the sort of man he is. For I believe that at one time, even tho he has outgrown it, he found his material love complete in Rose Cole, just as he claims to have found his spiritual love complete in me, and both in his lost Carmen. A love lacking the spiritual element must needs die sooner or later—usually soon. And his affection for her was worn out long ago. But it is different with her. She has never given him up, and he is as much under her dominating influence as I am under his."

Helen, the nurse, was silent from astonishment. No normal person could have such far-fetched ideas about the material and spiritual elements of love as Maurice Tennant pretended to have. Rose represented the material love, Beryl the spiritual, and his first wife the two combined, making him three different loves, realized separately. Was the man mad?

"Beryl," she said finally, "you have been living with a madman all this time. His conversation struck me as being peculiar; now I understand."

"I cannot think him wrong in his mind, exactly, and he has always been courteous and respectful to me. He is not willfully mesmeric when in my presence. He is charged with hypnotic power by that Werewolf, who is his very shadow. If he could escape her influence he could regain the normal nature which I believe he possessed before he met her."

"Ah," mused Helen, "there may be a way to rid him of her presence until he could recover his lost personality. Why not confine her on the third floor among the ghosts she hinted of to me?"

Helen saw the waite-robed figure start and gaze cautiously around, then look at her in open-eyed astonishment.

"Did—did she speak of that?" she gasped. "How strange! The third-floor rooms to which she and Maurice alone have a key, are a tabooed subject. It is also a place to be shunned."

"It was to warn me of that fact that she referred to it. She thought best to warn me at the outset, I suppose. She used poor judgment. She only aroused my curiosity. It was just that healthy inquisitiveness and my nose for adventure that brought me to you, Beryl. I scented a mystery and a chance to get into a mix-up out of the ordinary when I accepted the position here. Your spiritual husband"—with a quiet little shrug of her shoulders—"wrote the hospital superintendent asking him to send him a nurse who was not afraid of work or worry, and who was not inquisitive about things that did not concern her. How is that for an advertisement of a secret of some sort? The proposition was brought to me, as I was about to leave for work on private cases for myself. Immediately I wanted to go for the adventure it promised. I entered into correspondence with Mr. Tennant and insisted on a few weeks' rest and visit at home, which was granted grudgingly. While at Aunt Saphronia's we got to talking of old friends, you among them, and aunt told me you had thrown Dick over and eloped with a man who, she said, was described as a dark, handsome stranger. I met a man on the train who would answer that description, and Mr. Tennant's eyes are so like his that I should have thought it was he when I met him here, only the one on the train wore no mustache. I cannot remember his features very well, for his eyes held me whenever I looked in his direction, so I kept my face turned away.

"And he must have been a pickpocket," Helen continued, not noticing Beryl's agitation, "for I missed my locket and chain right after he passed me in the aisle. He had seen me looking at it—you know, the one with Dick's picture in it."

A faint sound issued from Beryl's lips. She was looking straight ahead of her at the patches of moonlight on the green sward, moving about as the breeze swayed the great branches of the trees.

"Did—did he catch sight of the picture inside when you were looking at it?" she asked finally.

"I think so, for he had been leaning toward me, as if gazing at the scenery from my window, which, however, corresponded to the view from his own. I wouldn't have lost the locket for worlds. But I was glad when the journey was over and I was rid of his presence. For his constant gaze made my head swim.

"And that reminds me, Beryl, to caution you not to meet your husband's gaze, even if you have to close your eyes in feigned weariness to avoid it whenever he is near you. Meantime I will keep you as secluded as possible.

"And, Beryl, I am going to exert some influence over Mr. Tennant, and I'm not going to use hypnotism, either. I shall assert myself as if it was my prerogative as nurse to do as I please with my patients—and you are one of them, from this on. I will threaten to expose him to the authorities for permitting you and Theresa to get into your present condition, if he attempts to discharge me. I have him in my power as well as Rose Cole. I shall be master of the situation. So don't worry, Beryl, but brace up and get strong again—strong enough to assert yourself and return to your friends."

"I have no friends, Helen," murmured Beryl, hopelessly.

"There is Dick——"

"Don't, Helen! Don't mention Dick Dallas. I have outraged his love in such a way that he will never forgive me."

"And yet he is searching for you desperately, and has been ever since you disappeared."

"Dear Dick!" murmured Beryl. "I could not look him in the face. Promise me, Helen, that you will not tell him where to find me."

"I know no more about where to find him than you do. But you must trust everything to me, and follow my instructions faithfully, if you want me to save you."

Beryl agreed, wearily. "Only," she added, "be very careful and don't seem interested concerning the secret of the third floor. Like Bluebeard's wife, I am forbidden to go near the closed rooms. I have never attempted it, lest I should find the Werewolf at my heels, ready to drag me into the mysterious chambers and leave me to die there."

"Who has forbidden you, Beryl? The housekeeper, or Mr. Tennant?"

"Both, Helen. Only it was done in a way to intimidate me, rather than in an authoritative manner. But it was quite effective."

"It will not be so in my case. I have a right to know what sort of place I am living in, and I'll discover the secret of those locked doors, when the time comes—when opportunity permits."

"Hush!" Beryl warned, tugging at Helen's dress.

Looking up, Helen discovered Mr. Tennant coming across the lawn straight toward them, his eyes, filled with a strange light, fixed on Beryl's face.

Helen's heart leaped into her throat!

Special Announcement

THE Chicago Ledger and The Saturday Blade, on and after October 6, when each publication will be practically doubled in size and contain many new features, will be sold for five cents each, instead of the two papers for five cents, the present price. The single subscription rate will be $1.50 per year for each paper, instead of $1.00.

This advance has become absolutely necessary, since the price of the paper on which they are printed has more than doubled, and the Government's rate of postage on papers is going up over 100 per cent. The price of labor, with every other element entering into the making of papers and periodicals, has greatly advanced since the war began, making an increase in the selling price imperative.

However, the Ledger after October 6 will contain a great deal more than five cents' worth. It will contain nearly once again the amount of printed matter that it now carries, including not only novels but a lot of short stories and new departments. It will have a new dress of head type, and each issue will contain a special cover picture. It will also be more fully illustrated than at present. We have a grand program laid out for the Ledger of the future, and we confidently expect that our hundreds of thousands of readers will stand by us, for we are going to give them a great run for their nickels. Watch the Ledger.

Had he heard? But she sprang to her feet and stood erect, facing him unflinchingly.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHEF.

BERYL, remembering the nurse's instructions not to meet her husband's eyes, remained seated in a drooping attitude, her head bent in dejection.

"Mrs. Tennant," he said, pausing before her, but not even taking her hand, "it is unwise for you to be out in the damp and chill of the evening. Miss Milston, will you kindly take my wife to her room?"

"There is no dampness in the air," replied Helen, quickly, her eyes meeting his squarely. "And it is the best thing for her listless condition—the best tonic she could have. And believe me, sir, she needs one badly."

The master of the house, standing there so tall and straight, so darkly handsome and imposing, gazed quietly at Helen, as if wondering at her temerity. She was as composed as he, but growing disconcerted at his steady gaze her eyes shifted. She turned to Beryl.

"I will take you in presently," she said. Then to her friend's husband:

"Mr. Tennant, your wife is ill. If you want her to live you must place her in my care without delay, or send her to a hospital. She has been shut away from light and air and sunshine until she is drooping like a flowering plant that has been kept in a dark place under a glass. Her blue-veined, transparent skin is like that of one who has been given arsenic in small doses for a long time."

Helen heard a sound which seemed like a smothered imprecation. Her employer was regarding her strangely, but she was not sure that he understood her insinuation. However, she went on bravely:

"She must have different care; and with your permission I will take her to my own rooms, and no one must be allowed to trouble her for a while, not until she has gained strength, at least.

Whether or not he understood the significance of all she said, it was evident he was not prepared to go against her will, for he replied quickly and in an affable manner:

"You are a nurse, and know more about such things than I do. Whatever you think is for the best must be done. She and Theresa must be brought back to health. They are all I have to inspire me to live up to my better nature. On the sea of life, Miss Milston, one needs a buoy to prevent his sinking not only into despair, but into degradation also. You have my permission to do as you wish, as far as the housekeeper will allow."

Beryl winced, but Helen was now indignant enough to strike straight from the shoulder.

"You mean Miss Cole."

He nodded. It was his turn to shift his gaze.

"I came here to do a nurse's work," said Helen, "and I am to be hampered by being under the directions of the housekeeper—a person ignorant of the first laws of health, as she has proved herself to be by having shut out God's free air and sunshine, not only from the house, but from the hearts and lives of its inmates."

She paused, knowing that she was presumptuous in assuming so much self-importance. Mr. Tennant's brow had grown dark, his lips were compressed, his black eyes beady. Helen felt Beryl's hand nestling into hers like that of a frightened child, and hastened to say:

"It is said of nurses, Mr. Tennant, that they are assuming and dictatorial. I grant you it is true. But every cause has its effect, and the reason for a nurse's arrogance is the ignorance they come in contact with concerning the laws of health and hygiene. When one sees how little the average person knows about what should be done for her patient, she cannot help feeling her own importance in that respect. And human-like, she shows it.

"If you were an engineer on a railroad train, you would want full control of that engine, wouldn't you? You would not permit one of the passengers to tell you how to run it."

Mr. Tennant's face relaxed. He even smiled. "I guess you are right," he said. "But my employes must not expect to alter the general conditions under which they work. The other nurses were not so self-assertive. If they had been competent, I should have kept them."

"Ah," said Helen, "I can easily imagine that. They were not even of average intelligence; otherwise they would have reported Theresa's case to the authorities."

The nurse was so used to carrying things with a high hand that she failed to realize how out of the ordinary her speech and manner were until she heard a little gasp at her side, and remembered that Beryl still felt herself in this man's power. Her voice softened a little when she added:

"The condition that poor child is in could have been prevented. Such criminal negligence should be investigated."

She did not cease her harangue, even when she saw his face grow white as the moonlight tessellating thru the branches fell full upon him.

"You would not find it easy to answer to a committee sent to investigate the matter, as to why this woman has been shut up, virtually a prisoner, until her health is undermined."

Helen paused only because the hand grasping hers had relaxed; but a glance showed her that Beryl needed no attention, and she continued:

"It is the truth I am telling you. You have not protected your family."

Mr. Tennent had taken a step forward, his face dark with rage. His lips were writhing, and she saw intense hate in his black eyes. She did not shrink now, as her feelings had complete control of her tongue.

"Either I must be given freedom to act, regardless of Miss Cole's opinion, or I am no longer in your employ!" she cried defiantly. "And you know what that means. I shall send the police here to discover the mystery of this house—and also of Hidden Lodge!"

The look of anger on the man's face gave place to one of surprise and even fear. He gave a quick glance at his wife whose gaze was still on the ground. Her manner was utterly passive, and he seemed reassured so far as she was concerned. With a quick movement he drew has hand across his brow; but he did not speak.

"Let us have an understanding, Mr. Tennant," Helen hastened to say, for she was not seeking an open rupture; she would rather see the thing thru in the way she had begun. "I will remain and care for your wife and daughter, if I may have full charge. I may have to call a physician; I cannot tell yet. In any event, I shall not betray any mistakes of the past, if I am allowed to nurse my patients back to health."

"You may have as much authority and as much freedom of action in this house as you can manage to wrest from Miss Cole," he vouchsafed. "I cannot answer for what that—that woman will do. Just fight it out between you. As for you—well, if I had known what sort of person you were, you wouldn't have been here. Mark that."

"And I shouldn't have come, if I had known what I was to run up against," retorted Helen. "I should have sent the police. You can manage Miss Cole just as you've managed you. She wouldn't care to face a charge of giving slow poison to this woman, and perhaps to Theresa also."

"Good Heavens, woman! What are you saying?" Maurice Tennant cried, looking like one who had received a blow. "It cannot be—it cannot be!" he muttered slowly.

Then he turned on his heel and strode away. They watched him ascend the steps and enter the house; then Helen turned to the half-fainting woman at her side and laughed.

"The worst is over, dear."

"Oh, Helen, why did you show your hand so plainly? Were you not afraid?"

"I wanted to put a stop to all underhanded doings by letting him know I am wise to everything. He will tell Miss Cole, and she will be afraid to go on with her devilry. They will not discharge me, because they will both understand that my absence will be more of a menace than my presence."

"Your plain speaking may have made him your enemy. You must be on your guard against them both. It is my duty to warn you, even tho he is my husband."

"I will remember. And now, Beryl, let us go in. I will take you straight to my rooms and have your maid bring your personal belongings there. You and Theresa are so fond of each other you will be companionable. And you both need companionship. Tell me, Beryl, how you came to be wearing white when everything around you is so somber?"

"It is a dress I had when a girl," Beryl answered. "I had outgrown it, and it was only lately that I have been able to wear it. I thought it would fit me, now that I had grown so thin, and I tried it on. I was tempted to go out into the moonlight, just as I used to do. You see, it reminded me of my girlhood."

"And of Dick?"

"Yes, Helen—of Dick."

When the two entered the nurse's room, Theresa was awake, and upon seeing Beryl, exclaimed: "Oh, it is mamma!"

Beryl clasped the little one in her arms. "I am going to stay with you after this, Theresa," she said. "Neither of us will be lonely any more. And we must thank your nurse for arranging it for us just as we would have liked to arrange it for ourselves, if only they would have permitted it."

"I am so glad," Theresa said simply.

Helen was obliged to go to the kitchen before retiring, and as the hall was in darkness she groped her way carefully and therefore silently. There was a light in the drawing-room, however, and as she passed the open door she saw Rose Cole and Maurice Tennant standing together as if in consultation. She did not pause, but she distinctly heard Hidden Lodge mentioned.

"No, Hidden Lodge is not inhabited," Maurice was saying. "The story is false."

"I was thinking it would be a good plan to transfer the 'ghosts' to the Lodge, if there is danger of their discovery here," was the answer, in a low tone.

"It is more dangerous to try anything like that now. We must placate her, Rose. She may have been sent here by Richard Dallas. Let her have her way about her nurse's work."

"Very well; if she doesn't try to pry into the secret of the third floor."

Helen hastened her footsteps, lest if she heard more she would want to hear it all; and it was not a matter that came under her jurisdiction, she decided. But Dick—if she could only learn where Dick was, it would be different. He was a detective and had a right to investigate closets supposed to contain skeletons. At any rate, she meant to learn more about Hidden Lodge, which she had heard mentioned several times, and had not yet spent one night beneath the roof of this house of mystery. It looked as if there would be enough adventure forthcoming to suit her excited fancy.

That night Beryl slept close to the open window which looked out upon the front lawn. And but for the spreading branches of the great trees growing so close to the house, the morning sun would have streamed into her face before she awoke; for she had slumbered restfully for the first time in long months.

Theresa's cot was also placed near an open window. Helen tiptoed into the room, and finding them both asleep, went down to eat breakfast with the chef. The family was not yet astir; besides, she wished to establish the habit of breakfasting in the kitchen. Mr. Jacques, as Helen called him whenever she had occasion to address him, was cheerful this morning, having made up his mind to be sociable, if one might judge by appearances. At any rate, his manner was quite different from his reticence of the day before.

She accepted his invitation to share his morning meal with him before preparing her patient's breakfast. She found everything appetizing, tho for the life of her she could not tell what some of the dishes were. They might have been French soup or chop suey, and they might not. Anyway, she relished them. And she was free to acknowledge that the coffee surpassed any she had ever made.

They chatted together till it was time for Jacques to serve breakfast to the servants. After offering her services, which were smilingly declined, she went about her own work, and when about to leave with the tray for her patients she said to him casually:

"I shall want to take a walk sometime today. If I cross the road and go into the woods, will I be apt to get lost?" She merely wished to draw him out, tho not expecting to learn much.

"No, maybe not," he answered, his dark eyes shining good-naturedly.

He did look so funny, Helen thought, in his white cap and apron. And the mustache and goatee really belonged to past ages—to the Dark Ages, she believed.

"But," he added, "there is nothing to see, except the woods and the river—that is, nothing but the outdoors."

"Really," laughed Helen, "but isn't that quite enough? However, I was wondering if there wasn't a house somewhere near the river where I could get a boat or a canoe; I would like to go out upon the water."

He looked at her quizzically. "Better stay out of a canoe, young lady, if you don't want to drown."

"I can swim, if I tip the canoe over. But you haven't told me whether there is a house anywhere near the river."

He hesitated, then coughed slightly. "Well, there is the old lodge; but no one lives there any more, I am told. If there should be a boat anywhere near it wouldn't be apt to be in good shape."

"Then you have never been near the place?" questioned Helen, watching his expression closely.

"No, miss. I have little time; and I

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take steps enough in this kitchen during the day, I reckon."

"You'd feel lots better if you'd take a long walk early in the morning," she advised.

"That would be before I am up, miss," laughed the chef.

Helen's blue eyes sparkled. "Get up earlier."

"And lose my beauty sleep?"

"You don't need one; you're quite handsome enough."

"Here you are jollying; and the master said you were a regular spitfire."

She set down the tray, becoming interested at once.

"Did he tell you that? Well, I didn't do any jollying when I talked to him, that's a fact."

"No, I overheard him tell the housekeeper that you struck straight from the shoulder."

"But I have to keep on the right side of the cook, don't I? Then, maybe you'll fix up some more of those nice dishes that I don't know what's in. And I like the coffee you make better than I do my own."

"Thank you, miss. I sure will. You're the first one in this house to speak a word of praise. And spitfire or not, you've laughed more in this short time than the rest have since I've been here."

"No wonder you looked glum the first time I saw you."

"It's a gloomy place, miss."

Helen saw that she could learn nothing further concerning Hidden Lodge from the chef, tho she believed he could tell her more if he cared to.

Why was he here, in this isolated place? She went back to her rooms wondering where she had seen those eyes before; he reminded her so forcibly of some one she had known a long time ago.

Then her thoughts flew back to Hidden Lodge. She would see it, and perhaps discover its secret—unravel the mystery surrounding it—before another sun went down.

This fascinating story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. Let us hear from you at once.

His Conclusion.

An excellent story is told by Kate Douglas Wiggin, the popular writer. A negro servant, wishing to get married, asked his master to buy him a license in the neighboring town. The master, being in haste, did not ask the name of the happy woman, but as he drove along he reflected on the many tender attentions that he had seen Cæsar lavish upon Euphemia Wilson, the cook, and, concluding that there could be no mistake, had the license made out in her name.

"There's your license to marry Euphemia," he said to the servant that night. "You're as good as married already and you owe me only $2."

The darky's face fell.

"But, Mass' Tom, Euphemia Wilson ain't de lady I'se gwine to marry. Dat wan't nothin' mo'n a little flirtation. Georgiana Thompson, the la'ndress, is the one I's gwine to marry."

"Oh, well, John," said the master, amused and irritated as the same time, "there's no great harm done. I'll get you another license tomorrow, but it will cost you $2 more, of course."

The next morning the darky came out to the carriage as it was starting for town, and, leaning confidentially over the wheel, said:

"Mass' Tom, you needn't git me no udder license; I'll use de one I's got. I's been thinkin' it over in de night, an' to tell you de troof, Mass' Tom, de conclusion o' my judgment is dat dar ain't two dollahs worth o' diff'rence between dem two ladies."

Lese Majeste.

"There will be no more trials for lese majeste in Russia," said Ivan Shinsky, editor of the Novoe Vremya, in a lecture in Chicago.

"Lese majeste, anyway, always seemed to me ridiculous. It always reminded me of the policeman who was asked:

"'Officer, what's the charge against this prisoner?'

"'Impersonating a policeman, your honor.'

"'Impersonating a policeman, eh?'

"'Yes, your honor. He held up his hand and stopped an automobile, instead of letting it run over him.'"

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THE EYE OF SIVA

Or, POOLS OF FLAME

By JAMES EDMOND CASEY

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CHAPTER XIII.

TRACK OF THE THREE.

"I'VE GOT it! That crimson cloth knotted to that iron flower-box is the means of escape of my friends, the assassins! They slid down it, jumped to the ground, and beat it away along the wall of the house! I can see their back trail!"

Carter Van Cleave, amateur detective, stood looking up at the crimson cloth. It was a strip of the color of blood, six inches wide, and some nine feet long. One end was tied to the wrought-iron frame of a flower-box, which projected from the window-sill of the boudoir in which the man lay dead. The other idled in the wind yards above the top of the basement window.

The grass directly beneath it was beaten to a black and green mass, the turf jellied by footsteps. This was the basis of Van Cleave's hypothesis.

"That must be it! In order to make a quick getaway, the assassins three ran to the window in the very room where they had committed their crime. They knotted that long red cloth to the iron box. Then they slid down it, one by one, and, one by one, took the drop into the mud. They sped away in the shadow of the house, and in their haste left this telltale cloth behind them. The dickens! These murderers remind me more of monkeys than of men!"

The young fellow actually shuddered. He knew he was hot on the scent, yet he was not sure of anything. The mystery and uncanniness—especially, the queer, outlandish, dim characters walking in and out thru the background of the crime—all were confusing, inscrutable, and wild.

The young amateur was for at once dashing upstairs and ascertaining further about the crimson cloth. He went to put his leg over the sill of the basement window, when a new idea struck him.

"What would Malachi do? 'Don't rush headlong into anything, me boy,' he'd say, 'or you'll fall over your own shadow.' I had better not run ahead like a hound that comes on the trail before he goes into it. Take each step slowly and, after exhausting its possibilities, go on to the next—that's my plan. In time, I'll get back to that cloth."

With that he stooped over and examined the sill of the basement window. Surely enough, in the center of the sill and also on the bottom of the window-sash were the marks where some sharp tool had been shoved between them to lever the window open!

"No; not a jimmy! These are the marks of a knife, a sharp knife! Was it the very Oriental dagger found in the back of Hubert Belasco?"

Once in the basement, he caught sight of a trail of muddy footprints. This new trail was not nearly so clearly defined as the one which had led him across the lawn. Only a thin collection of mud here, a darker gathering of dust there; but it was plain enough to follow.

It led him not to the staircase down which he had come from the kitchen, but thru a furnace-room, a well-appointed laundry, then a wine cellar. The doors of each had been forced with the same knife-like instrument as had opened the window.

The dying trail led up a narrow stairway to a pantry opening on the kitchen. This last the cub deduced upon hearing, thru the partition, the affable Dan still verbally ogling servants. Then thru a dining-room that overwhelmed him with its cut glass and old English furniture, out into a hall, and up the wide, velvet-carpeted staircase.

Here, in the rich carpet, the wet, sharp-pointed shoes had left deep, clear marks. But Carter Van Cleave hardly needed them to guide him. He sprang up the stairs, two at a time, for the boudoir at the top.

"It had all been plotted out beforehand! The men who killed Hubert Belasco—they must be men, for no woman would slide down a cloth as they did—these men were intimate with the plans and approaches of this house and boudoir. They found their way thru the intricate rooms of this huge house in the dead of night!"

He had reached the top of the stairs.

"And they were not ordinary housebreakers! A skilful second-story man will watch a house for days to get the lay of it, I know; but they do not kill, if they can help it, nor leave without any swag at all, as these fellows did. In a rich palace like this, too! No; my three are not professional burglars; neither did they desire money; nor, I'll wager, was last night their first night in this house!"

The amateur gum-shoe flung open the door of the boudoir with decision, for a faint footprint was visible in the velvet carpet before the sill. And then, notwithstanding that he had seen it before, he gasped in sheer astonishment, and stood staring at the rich Oriental room in half-gloom and the awful mystery on the rug.

His eyes searched that rug. And, tho the servants and detectives themselves had covered the glowing Kirmanshah with dull blotches, yet were visible the still slightly muddy footprints of the assassins.

It seemed they headed straight for the spot where the man lay dead; then, halfway from the door, suddenly halted.

"Alarmed? Were they alarmed by some sound or person? The butler? The murdered man?"

He bent over and scrutinized the marks. Yes; they had been swerved by something from their first purpose. Deep, triangular indentations told the amateur gum-shoe that they had tiptoed, of a sudden, out of the radius of crimson light cast by the night lamp before the evil, white-eyed face of Siva, the Destroyer.

One had hidden behind the short figure in Japanese armor in the corner. A number of long, narrow, pointed marks informed Van Cleave of that; also, that this one was the tall, lean man. Another had concealed himself behind the ebony writing deck. Where the third man had secreted himself, the amateur sleuth could not determine.

But no matter! His mind was already too wrought up by what the tall, lean man had done!

From the base of the armored figure to the feet of the murdered man the fiber of the costly Kirmanshah was ruffled back against its grain, like the fur on a cat's back, in a broad, zigzag band, for all the world as if a heavy sack of sand had been dragged across it!

It was a foot-wide ribbon of dullness across the sheen of the rug! It ended, at the feet of the dead man, in two, long, pointed footmarks, very deep, as if here some exertion had been made—some violence!

"Heavens! In one bound?" gasped Carter Van Cleave. "No! It's ten feet! It's impossible! It wouldn't explain that dull strip! That's like the trail of a cobra! What are these assassins—men, women, monkeys—or snakes?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A LEAP IN THE DARK.

CARTER VAN CLEAVE looked out the boudoir window. He saw Scott street, with its aristocratic mansions, climbing up the heights from the bay, the shimmering green of the lawn, the iron frame of the flower-box, and, tied to this, the end of the hanging crimson cloth. He threw up the window.

"Plain as day! After leaping upon Hubert Belasco—a skilfully thrown cord, a cry choked in its birth, that curious little kris in the back, and the man was dead! The assassins were seized with sudden panic. Perhaps it was the butler. Anyway, they leaped to this window, flung it open, knotted this cloth to the box, and, with all haste, slid down and dropped to the turf below. Then a quick skulk away in the shadow of the house."

He tried the knot. Then he got astride the sill.

"It's up to me to follow my monkeymen's example. I must take each step as it comes and proceed along into the next. My work up here is finished for the present. The scene shifts to below. So here goes!"

He grasped the cloth below the knot and swung himself clear of the window. Then, down! His nether fist closed tightly, as he neared the end, to slacken his fall. A sudden jar and his drop was checked completely—for a breath! The crimson cloth snapped at the knot! And down into black ooze plunged cloth and follower of Sherlock Holmes!

The amateur toppled over forward. To save his face, he sank his hands before him into the jellied turf. His fingers turned on some object overwhelmed in the slime. He rolled over and held the thing up.

"Bravo!" he exulted. "I've stumbled on my greatest find!"

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT THE SLIPPER TOLD.

IT WAS a slipper! A long, narrow, heelless slipper that ended in an upturned, hornlike point. It was black with mud, but here and there its original color showed thru and was a scarlet. And the fact that it was not a woman's slipper, but a man's, made it all the more peculiar and outlandish.

"It's an Oriental slipper. One of that kind of light, low shoe affected by Turks and Arabs. Yes; and Hindoos. It's plain and red, without jewel or other ornament, or so much as the mark of the maker. Yet, I'll wager, it can tell me a deal!"

The crimson cloth trailing over his shoulder, Van Cleave stood there in the soft earth and studied his new find. He took a piece of "copy" paper from his pocket and wiped the slipper dry. Then, after another minute of close examination, he looked down at the trail made by the assassins in skulking away. There, in the soft turf, were the distinct, marks of racing toes!

"That clinches it! This slipper was dropped by one of my three cutthroats in fleeing last night. It must have been the tall lean one—it is so long and narrow. Quite likely, in taking the drop, his feet sank so deeply into the mud that, when he started away, this stuck fast, and the poor devil had to dash off, minus one slipper."

The laugh at his own witticism sobered when half out.

"And that means this asssassin is an Oriental! He wore this Oriental shoe. Yes, and his companions must be men of the Far East, for they wore similar slippers, as told by their footprints. But whether they are Turks, Japs, Arabs, Hindoos, Chinese or Siamese, I don't know yet. I'll wager they came from the same place whence came that curious kris-like dagger, wherever——"

He broke off. He pulled the crimson cloth from his shoulder. He whistled.

"The deuce! This red cloth is a turban cloth!"

Surely enough, at one end it was stained and oily from contact with hair; the center was a bright crimson; the other extremity was worn and faded from exposure to sun and weather.

"Given a crimson turban-cloth, a scarlet slipper, and a small kris," smiled the new Vidocq, "and you have a mystery as deep-dyed in Orientalism as a tale of the Arabian Nights!"

He went grave suddenly.

"But why should these three assassins come across the world to strike down a man in this civilized city? Hubert Belasco was, of all men, the most inoffensive. He was never nearer the Far East than the Cliff House! And yet Orientals, with horn-pointed slippers, red turbans and kris-like daggers, cross the whole world to throttle him in his wife's boudoir, like the horrible thugs of ancient India!"

The young fellow shuddered and, unconsciously, glanced around. Then he laughed shakily.

"The dickens!" he broke off. "It's getting late. 'Scoop' Norton ought to be here by now, if he hasn't already arrived. And I had better finish my investigation. I'm hot on the scent, I think."

So saying, he followed the back track of the assassins from the puddle of mud, across the grass alongside the wall of the house, to where they had jumped down to Scott street. He jumped likewise, the scarlet slipper under one arm, the crimson turban-cloth flying out behind.

"That reminds me! I can't enter that house with these things dangling about me. I'll wind up this cloth and stow it in the slipper by my pocket."

As he did, he walked up the hill toward the front of the mansion. But the cloth, the tightly rolled, would not fit into the slipper. The long, pointed shoe appeared to be smaller within than it was without. The former cub halted and shoved his fingers into the toe of it.

He drew out a crushed wad of paper upon which was some writing!

"Jove! What have I here?"

In a sudden frenzy of excitement and

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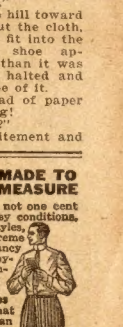

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eagerness, he slipped the turban and slipper under his arm, and, with shaking hands, smoothed out the wad of paper. A wrinkled sheet of white paper lay before him!

Was it an important clew? The key to the Great Enigma? With all the power of his eyes Van Cleave studied it.

On one side was a carefully drawn, tho scantily outlined, plan of the second story of the Belasco residence! The boudoir where the murder had been done was shown in red ink, the rest in blue. The only mark, save the lines for doors and walls, was a cross in red ink in one corner of the room of death.

The other side bore, in red and blue inks, an easily recognizable sketch of the squatting, four-armed, pearl-eyed idol before whom the murdered man had fallen—Siva, the Destroyer!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TELLTALE CIGARETTE.

"SIVA, the Destroyer!" Carter Van Cleave, as he gasped, crushed the paper in his clinched hand.

"That frowning, cruel-eyed old god again! I never thought myself superstitious, but somehow I cannot help believing that this evil Oriental divinity has something to do with this crime, this mystery! There were the queer words of Mrs. Belasco, the small Siva on that kris—and now this sketch! The white-eyed face of that god seems always leering out of this puzzle at me!"

For the second time he had to smooth out the paper to study it. Then, closely and carefully, he scrutinized and pondered the plan of the boudoir and its approaches, which had been sketched in a few bold strokes upon the white paper, as by some master draughtsman.

The boudoir had been first drawn in blue ink, then gone over in red. Each door was plainly shown, each window. And in one corner of the outline of it was the only distinguishing mark of any kind on the plan—a cross in red ink.

"What can it stand for? What does it indicate? Is it the place where Hubert Belasco was to be found by the assassins and struck down? That's it, for it seems to mark the spot where he lies dead—if it's not a little nearer the wall."

The young fellow proceeded up Scott street toward the front of the house. He finished the interrupted task of shoving the red turban-cloth, like a shoetree, into the scarlet slipper, then stowing the shoe in the side pocket of his overcoat. The paper, however, he still pondered over.

"It's the most important clew yet! So much, that it tells me so much, as that it makes me sure of my deductions and inductions. Now I knew for a certainty that there is no scandal behind this mystery. Malachi Courtney, keen detective tho he is, is on the wrong track. And I, Carter Van Cleave, alone am in the way to solve this mystery!"

He turned into Pacific avenue.

Malachi proceeded in great style for a certain distance; then his logic deserted him. A suspicious fact or two, and he fell back on the commonplace police theory of marital infelicity, intrigue and jealousy. He is too dyed in the wool, too used to the ordinary in crimes to see the deep Oriental plot behind this assassination. I alone kept close to the clews and worked out a firm foundation to build a structure of facts. And hence, I alone know that it was three turbaned Orientals who throttled and stabbed Hubert Belasco to his death!"

He swung in toward the entrance of the mansion, and, as he did, neatly folded the plan and placed it carefully in an inside pocket of his coat.

"No; I will not show it to Malachi! He has scandal on the brain. He would not be open to reason now. He would laugh at me, perhaps pick a flaw in my chain of vital clews."

He pounded a clinched hand into the palm of the other.

"It's up to me to make good! Let Malachi think scandal, let his chief think scandal, let Patullo and 'Scoop' Norton think scandal! I will keep what I have learned to myself until I have built up a structure of facts that cannot be laughed at, nor supercilliously toppled over like a house of cards! Then I will speak! Then I will make good in the way I told Patullo I would! I will yet write a story to startle this city!"

Aglow with his decision and new-born sense of triumph, the young greenhorn sleuth opened the other glass doors of the entrance and stepped into the vestibule. He pressed the electric button. While he waited, he glanced around the vestibule. Suddenly he gave an exclamation of delight, and bent over.

"Good! he cried. "Good luck!"

He held up the butt of a half-burnt cigarette. It was a Turkish cigarette of the same high-priced brand as the five cigarettes that had rolled, with the fake stones, from the silver cigarette case of Hubert Belasco! The amateur gum-shoe ascertained this from the partly obliterated "—ascus" stamped on the wrapping; the name of the importer, I. Damascus, he had noted on each of the five cigarettes that had fallen from Belasco's cigarette case.

And from this Van Cleave was sure it had been cast there the night before by Hubert Belasco himself!

"Good luck, I should say! This proves that Hubert Belasco entered last night from a car or taxi by this door. I judged as much from his clean, dry shoes. He halted in this vestibule, took out his keys and unlocked the door, then flung away this half-smoked cigarettee, as he had been in the habit of doing night after night for months before. Thus it proves as well that Hubert Belasco entered coolly and regularly enough—not, as I supposed, skulking into his own house in fear and dread!"

With that, the former cub placed the Turkish cigarette in a sheet of notepaper, then carefully stowed it away in an inside pocket, as he had done with all his other treasures.

Of a sudden, as he withdrew his hand, he started. A surprising thought had startled him.

"The deuce! No wonder he smoked and entered so boldly! He had no need to fear meeting the servants or his wife. There was nothing irregular about him, save his sudden return. For, when he opened this door last night, he was not disguised as a woman!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEANING OF THE RED MARK.

"OH, YOU CARTER!"

Even as Wilfey, the English butler, opened the front door of the mansion, in answer to Van Cleave's ring, a shout and rapid footsteps on the walk behind caused the former Pennsy quarter to swing around.

A young man, some years older than the cub, had just dropped off a clanging Pacific avenue car, and was sprinting over the tesselated pavement toward the entrance.

He was a tall, gaunt-faced fellow of eager expression and lively steel-gray eyes. He was dressed, almost to the point of flashiness, in the latest English style. Clean-cut and dapper, he seemed a hustling, rapid-fire, get-there sort.

Van Cleave recognized him, at a glance, as the hero and idol of the Mail-Tribune office—"Scoop" Norton, the star. Then the great newsman was at his elbow.

"Your name is Carter, isn't it? Knew you from seeing you 'round the office, y'know. Besides, Pat, the old man, mentioned you were on this story."

The star's tone was self-sufficient and patronizing in the extreme. It slightly irritated the former cub.

"My name's Van Cleave. Carter's my first name——"

"Oh, I see." Carter Van Cleave. Got 'em slightly mixed. Doesn't matter, anyway. But say, Pat said he fired you. Is it—is—er——"

"Yes, it's true," Van Cleave returned simply.

Norton shrugged his shoulders in his Jove-like way.

"Oh, well! Have to be fired every so often. Part of the game. Not your fault, anyway. Pat ought to know better than send a raw cub out on this kind of a story. Why, from Pat's account, it beats anything I've been detailed on in an aeon! Pat's the one that should be fired! A story like this is too big for a regular man, let alone a cub. It needs a star——"

"Like you!" The amateur sleuth, as he listened to the conceited reporter, could not help venturing that cool dig.

"Scoop" Norton, clever newsman tho he was, fell for it like a duck for water.

"Why, yes! It needs a star like me, as you say! This is just the sort of story I make good on!"

He regarded the erstwhile cub with favor.

"Do you know, I can write up this sensational dope in my sleep! Imagination, my boy! Imagination, and a magazine of red, green, yellow and purple words! That's what I have up my sleeve that makes me the card of the Mail-Tribune! Imagination and the right words—get those two requisites down pat, like yours truly, the old 'Scoop,' and you'll be a star like me, not a hungry cub!"

And the great man patted Van Cleave on the shoulder affectionately.

"Why don't you write books?" the cub asked, with well-feigned ingenuousness.

The star glowed at him and winked a solemn eye.

"Shh! Speak low, my boy! I've thought of that. Fact is, I've got a trunkload of material for stories stowed away in my room for future work. Then some day when I get time and feel like it—Oh! you'll hear of me, never fear! Bet I'll give a lesson to those long-haired sports, who write six-best and short stories! I tell you, Carter, I'm a bear feline on imagination and good words!"

All this time the cub and star had been mounting the great staircase to the boudoir on the second story. Now as they reached the top, the silence-shod butler left them to find their own way. And, at that, Norton turned to Van Cleave and in a low tone asked:

"Say, what the deuce is behind all this? Scandal? That's my first supposition when I'm sent out on a society story that's got murder and mystery to it! Oh, I'm some wise boy——"

"I think you're mistaken in this instance!" If there was one thing that exasperated Carter Van Cleave, now, it was the mention of scandal, which came so easily to the hands of these men. "Scandal is out of the question here."

"Think so? Have you seen the lady of the house? Say, I've written her up so many times for making society gasp

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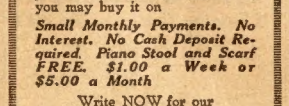

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that I'll believe almost anything of her! Yes, and——"

"Ah, 'Scoop,' me boy! How's the old scout!"

The star swung around.

"Oh, you Malachi!" He put out his hand. "The 'Scoop' 's fine! How's Old Sleuth?"

"Feeling great!" answered the good-natured detective. "A case like this is a regular jug of whisky to me—that bracing!"

"Malachi, what's in the wind? Scandal?" He winked an eye.

Courtney not only winked, but nodded wisely.

"Scandal, 'Scoop'? Why this case is as full of scandal as a dog with fleas! Listhen!"

The detective linked arms with the reporter and, verbally playing battledoor and shuttlecock with the mystery, the highest names in society, Hubert Belasco's honor and that of his wife, led the way up the great hall to the boudoir.

In disgust and contempt, Carter Van Cleave followed. He did not care to listen to the story of the case as told by Courtney with his theory of scandal at the bottom.

The detective was a veteran of years of police life, and had seen much that was sordid and vile. Hence, tho of a clean, strong temperament himself, and stating the case straightforwardly and unspiced, yet it reeked with sickening scandal.

And this, the reporter, a small-minded, albeit clever, man, masticated with avidity, even adding theories and details of his own.

"Blame them!" muttered Carter Van Cleave. "It makes me sick to hear it! Scandal, scandal, scandal! Scandal to them is written all over this mystery! And what makes their false suppositions so boring, they are all unwarranted, off the track!"

Unconsciously, in his vehemence, he clinched his fists.

"There is no scandal behind this mystery! The thing goes deeper than that! The hand of an Eastern god does not reach across the whole world to strike down a mere jealous husband! No; Siva, the Destroyer, struck with a deeper purpose! There is mystery here, and it is the dark mystery of the Orient—sinister, inscrutable, exquisite and vile!"

The young American spoke softly, in mock reverence; but, in truth, the old, old, pearl-eyed idol and its seeming connection with the mysterious crime obsessed Carter Van Cleave more than he cared to admit even to himself.

As Malachi Courtney put his hand out to pull back the portieres, which draped the doorway to the boudoir, "Scoop" Norton said:

"I wonder who was the man in the case—Wilkins Middlemist, the society rake and—Ah! what a setting for intrigue, tragedy, mystery!"

He surveyed the magnificence of Ynez Belasco's boudoir with the trained eyes of the crack reporter.

Over his shoulder, Van Cleave, appearing strangely wrought up, looked in.

"The plan I found in the red slipper!" he thought. "What can it tell me, now?"

He stepped back and, without being noticed, took the folded paper from his pocket, spread it out in his hand, and looked at it. Then he stepped forward and gazed over the shoulders of detective and newsman into the gorgeous but gloomy chamber.

He heard not "Scoop" Norton's awed comments on the sybaritic, Oriental splendor of the room of death. All his mind and soul was wrapped up in finding out what the only distinguishing mark on the diagram stood for, what the red mark meant.

"The red cross marks the spot where Hubert Belasco lies dead!" he concluded, after a long minute's examination. "It is placed about exactly on the spot where he was struck down! But wait! Am I wrong? Is the red mark a little more to one side—nearer the wall?"

He was not sure. He studied the plan. Then he looked back at the room.

"Good Lord!" he breathed. "The very spot! The red mark indicates the very spot where stands that horrible Oriental god, Siva, the Destroyer!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CLEW ON THE CUFF.

AN OLD, old temple in a valley of sun and red poppies; an evil, frowning, bronze face among the pagodas brooding shadows; and men with crimson turbans and scarlet slippers bowing down before that god, Siva, the Destroyer—that scene and a hundred more like it suddenly flashed upon Carter Van Cleave's brain.

The discovery he had made that the red mark on the diagram indicated the statue of Siva, hinted once more to him that the Destroyer had something to do with the mystery surrounding the assassination of Hubert Belasco. And somehow a mystical note had been struck in the young detective's brain that conjured up vague, outlandish scenes of faraway forgotten lands of the East.

Of a sudden, he was startled out of his trance, brought back from Asia to San Francisco, to the boudoir of murder and mystery, by the words of "Scoop" Norton. Said the star:

"Malachi, my boy, did you forget to examine Belasco's room?"

The reporter and detective had finished going over the boudoir. They had discovered nothing new, save that Hubert Belasco wore, beneath the green velvet dress, a white, plaited shirt and a pair of serge trousers. This, it appeared, had prompted the words from Norton.

"Sure?" he replied to the surprised exclamation from the detective. "Examine his room, his effects, for clews. Perhaps there is where he left his coat and vest——"

"That is where he left them!" put in Carter Van Cleave. "Of that I am sure."

Both star and detective stared in astonishment at the young man. Norton was the first to recover.

"Good bluff, son!" he said. "Posing as a sure-enough Sherlock—eh?"

"No, I'm not bluffing. Come and see."

The two bewildered men followed the young fellow out of the room into the hall. After opening a few doors, they found the master's suite near the front of the house. They found, also, the sought-for coat and vest, and a raincoat of modish make, a cane, gloves and hat. All had been thrown, evidently in great haste, upon the bed.

"Good work kid!" remarked the star, sarcastically, "Lucky you looked in here before. You worked that bluff fine."

Van Cleave did not trouble himself to answer. He had known, from the cigarette, that Belasco had entered the house, the night prior, fully garbed in man's attire, and naturally had concluded that he had doffed his vest and coat and other outer garments in the bedroom preparatory to masquerading as a woman. But he did not bother to explain this to the swell-headed reporter.

He joined Malachi before the bed. Both looked down at the scattered clothing. After a moment, the cub remarked:

"The deuce, Malachi! Hubert Belasco must have been in the very devil of a hurry! The servants paint him as the most careful and precise of men in his habits of life and dress. And here, instead of hanging his clothes in the wardrobes, he has thrown them about as if he had not a moment to spare!"

The ruddy detective shook his head.

"It looks bad, my boy! I think he did not intend to stay here and go to bed! It's my opinion he came to this room just to divest himself of his outer garments, get into that disguise, and then prowl about his own house in the dark, with that Japanese knife in his hand!"

The detective looked full at the amateur.

"Me boy," he said solemnly, "every new clew makes me all the more shure that scandal is behind this mystery!"

"But Malachi," Van Cleave began, to object, when a cry stopped him.

"Scoop" Norton had appeared in the doorway of the bedroom, holding a large green picture hat in his hand, and was shouting with the joy of discovery.

"Boys! Here's the woman's hat which goes with that green dress! I found it in Belasco's dressing-room in a wardrobe! Some find, eh?"

Malachi nodded emphatically.

"You bet, 'Scoop,' me boy! That shows that Belasco had his movements of last night thought out long in advance. He had all preparations made, even to having his wife's green dress and hat hidden in his rooms weeks beforehand!"

"I guess he wore hat and dress until he entered this house last night, Malachi. Then he took off the hat, hung it in that closet where I found it, and wore only the green gown."

"No!" It was Van Cleave. "Hubert Belasco came in attired in man's raiment! See that coat, vest, raincoat and hat! He put on his wife's green dress in this very room! But he was in the very devil of a hurry, as shown by those hastily thrown clothes, and did not stop to complete his disguise by wearing that hat!"

The two men stared at the young fellow, with wonder growing in their eyes; but as he had lucidly explained his statements, they could not laugh at him this time.

Then the detective turned his attention to the bureau upon which were a collar and tie, two white cuffs telescoped one on the other, and—a rouge pot! He held it up.

"The divvil!" he gasped. "The murdered man painted his face to complete his disguise!"

"It looks that way, Malachi." Van Cleave agreed, over his shoulder. "What do you think of it?"

"What do I think of it? I wish I knew, me boy! But, take it from me, there's something deep and sinister behind all these preparations! Why else——"

"Look, Malachi! 'Scoop,' come here! Look at this!"

Carter Van Cleave, amateur detective, held up one of the white cuffs. It was the one that had been partly hidden beneath the other. Carter Van Cleave had examined both, thinking that Hubert Belasco might have been one of the seventy-nine million men in the United States who make a note, now and then, on their cuffs. From the fact that he held up the lower cuff and shouted so excitedly, it was plain that his idea had been substantiated. He had found something—something startling!

There against the virgin white of the cuff was scribbled in indelible pencil:

"Cheridah—10!"

Malachi Courtney, "Scoop" Norton, Carter Van Cleave, one after the other, repeated that word. In it lay the rub! For it was the name of a woman—the given name of a certain woman!

"Cheridah! Can it be Cheridah Shannon, the beautiful, entrancing 'Cherry' Shannon, the musical comedy star!" Norton spoke the thought of all three. "Is merry little 'Cherry' behind all this mystery?"

"Yes!" Malachi snapped, his face stern. "There is a woman—not a man—in this case! Adah Cheridah Shannon, the actress, is that woman!"

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it, and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

In South America.

In an article on "Quito, the City of the Equator," Harry A. Franck describes some of the difficulties he encountered when shopping in South America.

"The line of demarcation between the gente decente and the gente del pueblo of Quito is the white collar. Naturally the tendency is to make it as wide and distinct as possible. When I had searched the entire city I found my customary brand of collar—at four times its American price—but the lowest collar in stock was weirdly suggestive of some species of human giraffe.

"'You misunderstand me,' I protested. 'I did not ask for a cuff, but for a collar.'

"'But this is a collar, senor,' cried the shopkeeper.

"'Something lower, please.'

"'But this is a very low collar. It is so low that no one in Quito will wear it, and we are not importing any more of this brand.'

"In the matter of shoes I found at last a Massachusetts product that might have been endurable; but when I had beaten the dealer down to about twice the American price, a seven was found to be the largest size in stock. The merchant was on the verge of tears.

"'Why,' he gasped, gazing resentfully at the offending member, 'there is not a foot in Quito as large as that shoe.'"

The Chaplain.

One of the stories told by Spencer Leigh Hughes in his speech in the House of Commons one night tickled everybody. It is the story of the small boy who was watching the speaker's procession as it wended its way thru the lobby. First came the speaker, and then the chaplain, and next the other officers.

"Who, father, is that gentleman?" said the small boy, pointing to the chaplain.

"That, my son," said the father, 'is the chaplain of the House."

"Does he pray for the members?" asked the small boy.

The father thought a minute and then said: "No, my son; when he goes into the House he looks around and sees the members sitting there and then he prays for the country."

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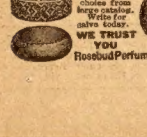

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THE BOY NEXT DOOR.

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think he said?
He said there wasn't a Santa Claus,
An' said he wasn't afraid
To get right up in the Sunday school
An' holler it all out loud.
He said he wanted to do it, too,
An' have a laugh at the crowd.

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think he did?
He made a face at the teacher's hat
An' said 'twas only a lid!
He winked his eye at my sister, too,
An' started to pull her curls.
An' then he stuck out his tongue an' laughed,
An' said he hated the girls.

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think he knows?
He knows the place where the Brownies live
An' where the licorice grows.
He knows the home of the gobolins,
An' visits it ev'ry night!
He knows the reason the skeeters come
An' what'll fix 'em tight.

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think he heard?
He heard the birds in the treetops talk,
An' understood ev'ry word!
He watched a duck when he built his nest
Way up in a apple tree.
An' if I visit his Uncle Tom,
He's gointer show it to me!

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think he found?
He found a mine that is full of gold,
All hidden under the ground!
He says he'll soon be a million-ar,
From gold he's diggin', you see.
An' if I lend him a nickel, now,
He'll give a dollar to me!

The boy that lives in the flat nex' door—
Now whatter you think's his name?
His name is Algernon Francis Smith—
His father's name is the same—
He says the feller he likes the best
All over the world, is me
An' why my mother don't care for him,
I simply never can see!

—Martha Coleman Sherman.

THE LANTERN.

The lighthouse, built of great gray stones and very tall indeed, stood on a point of the beach that stretched out into the sea. In the very top was a shining light and around that light were many bright reflectors that made it shine just so many times as brightly. Every evening the light in the lighthouse shone afar out over the sea, making a bright path on the water that helped the ships to find their way among the rocks and shoals, safely to the land.

The fisherman and his little lad lived in a very small hut on the beach. Ever since he had been old enough to sit up for a while after supper the fisherman's little lad had watched for the great light in the lighthouse to flash out across the water.

"It is as bright as the sun, or the moon, or the stars," he would sigh very often. "I want, more than anything else, to be the keeper of the lighthouse lamp."

"Oh, you can never do that, little lad," the fisherman would say. "The keeper of the lamp in the lighthouse is a very important person indeed, and is always sent here by the King. He would never think of putting humble folk like us, from a fisherman's hut on the beach, in the lighthouse."

One night there was a ship that struck a rock far out in the water. The fisherman's little lad was awakened from his sleep by the sharp call of her whistles, and he saw his father and the other fishermen who had strong boats run down to the beach and launch them and row out to help the ship. Straight toward her they rowed thru the light from the lighthouse that showed them the way. And they brought back the sailors and precious cargo of the ship safe to the land before morning.

"It is the most wonderful thing in the world to tend so great a light," the fisherman's little lad said over and over again to himself. "I shall never be able to do so wonderful a thing. How I wish that I could!"

When he was old enough to know how to take care of it the fisherman gave his little lad a lantern. It was small and had only a tiny, flickering flame, because the oil to feed it was costly in those days and must be used sparingly. But the little lad found out that by keeping the wick cut evenly and the brass parts of the lantern polished, and the glass clean and clear the lantern gave a steady light. He used to trim and fill it every day, and then light it after the sun had set and put it in the window. Often people would pass up and down the beach in the dark, and the light from the little lad's lantern helped them to find their way home.

Once the King sent word that he needed only one more pearl to make the jewels in his crown complete, and he asked for one that was as round as a raindrop and as white as a snowflake and as smooth as a bit of glass.

The fisherman had a great haul of fish one day, and as he and the little lad were taking them out of the boat that evening, they found, by the light of the lantern, just such a pearl among them, fastened to an oyster shell. They sent it to the King, who wished to pay them a great deal of money for it, but they would not take the money. It was honor enough to have made the King's crown complete, they decided.

It was late one summer, when the winds were beginning to blow high and cold like the fall, that the fisherman decided to go in his boat for a longer trip than usual. He was going to carry a load of dried fish and exchange it at a village for flour and sugar and cans of milk—food for the winter for himself and the little lad, and enough for a hungry stranger, should one pass their hut.

"Good-by and good luck! And do not forget to hang the lantern in the door tonight," the fisherman called back, as he rowed away from the shore. "It may be cloudy; but I shall be home by suppertime."

All day the little lad was busy mending the nets and cleaning the fishhouse, and at last getting the supper. He lighted his lantern and hung it in the window, but at sunset his father had not returned, nor at suppertime, nor when it was black night and the wind was high, and the light in the lighthouse flashed out across the dark water.

"Father, oh, father! Where are you?" the little lad cried, as he ran up and down the beach, but the wind carried his voice back. Then he fetched his little lantern and swung it out over the sea.

"Come back to me, father!" he cried.

When it was morning the fisherman came. His cargo was partly gone and his boat was leaking, but he rowed home in safety. He had struck a rock and then been lost in the storm.

"How did you find your way, father?" the little lad cried, as the fisherman pulled up on the beach. "Did you follow the lighthouse light?"

"No; it was so bright that it blinded my eyes," the fisherman said. "I saw a tiny light, like a star dropped to the beach and shining to show me the way home. What do you suppose it was?"

"Why, that must have been my small light," said the little lad, looking down at his lantern, which still burned brightly.

AFRAID OF A PEANUT.

When Jim Crow became Bunny's chum he was a very stately bird. Of course he was black and wicked-looking and made a great fuss about some things. But he was Bunny's pet and was very intelligent.

He followed Bunny around the house, just like a dog; and he would chase Nicodemus, the cat, around the yard until every hair upon her body stood erect with fright. If he saw anything bright lying around, the crow was always sure to find it.

One day Bunny's Aunt Lynne lost her diamond ring. It was loose and had in some way slipped from her finger.

Jim Crow was taking his daily march across the nursery floor when he suddenly stood still and cawed—how he did caw! Every one in the house instantly ran to the spot. There stood Jim with the sparkling diamond ring in his beak.

It required a good deal of coaxing to get Jim Crow to drop the ring, and Aunt Lynne had to give him a bright piece of silver to pay for it.

One day Bunny's mother brought him home some peanuts. Bunny always shared all his goodies with Jim Crow, so he held one out to the bird, who immediately began to squawk and tremble as if in great fright. He even danced up and down in his terror, and eyed the peanut as if he expected it was going to tear him to pieces.

"Take it, Jim Crow, and crack it, like this," Bunny directed, putting the peanut between his teeth.

"Caw-aw-aw!" screamed the crow, every black feather bristling with fear.

Just then Bunny's father came into the room and when he saw the terrified crow he began to laugh.

"I forgot to tell you something about Jim," he said; "I don't think I ever should have thought of it again if I hadn't happened to see that peanut. The man from whom I bought him told me that a peanut was the only thing he was afraid of. When he was a baby crow a boy threw a handful at him, and since then he has almost had a fit whenever he has seen a peanut."

After this experience whenever Bunny ate peanuts it was always out of sight of Jim Crow. "But if Jim only knew how good they taste, I'm sure he'd like them," Bunny insisted.

A DOG STORY.

A rather nice "dog story" from the trenches. In a section of the line where the enemy's trenches were only some thirty yards away there had been stiff fighting, and one of our men left badly wounded midway between the lines moaned so pitifully that the officer could scarcely hold back his comrades from certain death in attempting to bring him in. Taxing his brains for a plan of rescue, his eye fell on a stray dog, which was accustomed to run to and fro between the British and German trenches, finding friends in each.

He quickly wrote a note: "Will you allow us to bring our man in?" tied it round the dog's neck and sent him scampering across to the German line. In a few minutes the animal returned with the reply: "Will give you five minutes." Instantly the officer and a couple of his men seized a stretcher and were over the top. They got their man into safety in four minutes and gave the enemy a cheer by way of thanks before both sides returned to business.

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Old Foes Afloat

Or, The Sea Women

By William H. Manning

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CHAPTER XIV.

"IF," THE mate went on steadily, "you will look at me closely you will see that I'm a total stranger to you. I never saw you in my life until you came on board this ship."

"Why," the woman demanded angrily, "do you lie about this? It will not do you any good, for I insist upon my rights. I am your wife!"

"Give details. Who am I? Where did we meet, and where did you marry that man you want to harness to you for life?"

"I formerly lived in Cape Town, Africa. I met you there, saw you there later, and married you there."

"When was this?"

"Almost two years ago——"

"Why haven't you been with me since?"

"I wanted to stay, but you ran away. Stop questioning me. You talk as if you did not know the circumstances. I'll waste no time over such folly. I am your wife, and you recognize me easily Yes, and I recognize you, and shall hang fast to you now I've found you."

"You are eloquent," retorted Harding, with sarcasm. "All that's needed is truth to back you up. You have been in this ship only a short time, but you can't tell your story twice alike. A person who heard you talk yesterday said that you claimed to have met me in San Francisco, married me in London, and —"

"It is false!" she cried intemperately.

"Do you challenge my informant or yourself when you say that? As for your claims, it's crooked all thru. I'm not going to talk with you further about it. Just what your object is in trying this game I don't know, but you will easily see that it won't work. False claims while on board this ship are one thing, but when we get ashore it will be different. Do you think that a claim that I was here or there at a given time will get belief in law when I can prove I was somewhere else at that time?"

Her face lost its confident expression and she was slow to answer. Before her tongue served her there was an interruption. Albert Roxford emerged from one of the staterooms, paused, smiled and nodded as if deeply contented with the situation.

"Score one for Harding!" he said lightly. "Alibis count in law, you know, Miss Geraldine, chuck the game to the dogs!"

"What do you mean?" she demanded hotly. "Do you want to insult me?"

"Not worth while," Albert languidly returned, "but I'm on to your diplomatic burglar act. Better drop it!"

"Sir, I shall call for help if you——"

"Oh, gammon!" exclaimed young Roxford. "I tell you I am wise. The fact is, I heard my esteemed aunt, Miss Annice, coach you in all this. A gay bird Annice is. When you came on board this ship you were plain Geraldine Perriton. No wedding ring, no husband, you notice. But my weird aunt took you in charge, told you how hard up you were, castaway of the sea, penniless girl, and so on, and she laid a plan then and there. Told you Harding, here, was rich, and a good man for a husband, and suggested that you claim him. I heard that little plot, Geraldine!"

Albert's words came forth in a stream that, tho quiet, was sweeping, and they did not miss their mark. The woman's color had responded to their flow, and she was no longer the confident person of the previous minutes. Flushed of cheek, she listened and gave her anger to the speaker, tho there was but little of real courage in the defiance that followed.

"How dare you!" she snapped. "This is infamous!"

"I thought so at the start," lazily asserted the captain's son.

"You know it is false——"

"If you mean my account, it is not so. All true! Aunt Annice concocted the scheme, and you have tried to live up to it. I'll say right now that I doubt that Harding has got that pot of money that my aunt used to tempt you with. The bait was only a dream, I think. Pass that by, tho. Harding, you can sleep well tonight, for this woman is no wife of yours. Ask Aunt Annice!"

"You wretch!" cried Geraldine.

"Just as you say. However, I'm done now. Harding, you have heard the truth. Fight it out as you wish. That's all!"

The speaker was turning away, but Harding checked him.

"I believe your story, Albert," he said, "but why should Miss Annice do what she did? Why make up this plot?"

Roxford paused, meditated, beat his foot lightly on the floor and seemed to consider deeply. Then he looked up suddenly.

"Twenty-five miles from the home place of my family," he said slowly, "there is an excellent insane asylum, but my aunt is not there. She is in this ship."

With this remark Albert moved quickly away, not once looking back. The mate watched him, pondering over his enigmatical last remark, and wondering if it could be interpreted in more than one way. When he turned his head, Geraldine was no longer to be seen, but a recently-closed door suggested an explanation of her disappearance.

Harding went to his own room, wrapped up in thought. He was confident that there would be no further trouble from the woman who wanted a husband. The truth had been told, the scheme exposed, and Geraldine might be treated as a minus quantity from that time forward.

What Albert had said did more than eliminate the woman, for the problem was presented—why had the captain's sister started the plot? The mate suspected that he knew, and other things fell into line with illuminating effect. He was learning a good deal about the Roxford family.

The day passed without further events of acute interest. The mate of the ship Herman Hammond was the mental center of attraction, but he lay unconscious in his berth, and gave no aid to them when they tried to help him forward in his sickness.

"Nevertheless," said the captain, "the man has a fighting chance to recover."

"All of his shipmates died of the same disease," Corabel reminded.

"Yes. That part can't be denied. Still, I think this man is somehow different, and I see slight improvement since I got my drugs to work on him. That, of course, may be only temporary, but I hope for the best."

"Yet you don't know what disease you are doctoring for."

"Perhaps not, but we gather from poor Gideon's journal that they called it a 'poison.' I think that was right, and I'm acting on the theory that the whole crew of the Hammond ate something that reeked with unsuspected venom. All food that looks good is not really good, nor safe. I'm making a big try to save that fellow below."

"I hope you will do it."

"Well, time will tell. Meanwhile, he has a great helper in the abundance of strength that remains with him. His muscular power is surprising, in one otherwise so bad off. Let's keep on hoping."

"No clew to his name?"

"Not a bit."

"Of course it really doesn't matter, but I'd like to know. Yes, and his history. I wonder what his life has been—but what's that to me? Whether he lives or dies, we shall soon forget him."

The day passed and another night fell. As usual, Harding had the first night watch, and he took up his duties with many thoughts crowding his mind. That they were far from being disagreeable was proved by the step of the man as he walked. He moved freely, with elasticity and firmness in every motion. Once he paused and patted the rail, at the same time running his gaze over the ship.

"Good old hooker," he muttered, "May you have many more years afloat. I was out of my head, I reckon, when I said I would wreck you. Ridiculous I'm not a wrecker, anyhow, and it doesn't matter what cause I have to hate anybody. Not a bobstay nor a ratline of you will I harm. I had lost my bearings and my compass when I entertained ill feelings against you."

His thoughts turned elsewhere.

"That delightful Miss Geraldine will probably be willing to take a back seat now. Her fangs are drawn. With anything like an even break I shall fetch to Rio without serious trouble, I reckon. After that——"

"I say, Harding, just take me on for a cruise, will you?"

The voice interrupted the mate's meditations, and he turned and saw Albert Roxford. That young man removed his cap and nodded slightly.

"I've got something to say to you," he added.

"All right," Harding responded. "Go ahead."

"Take a look at this thing that I hold in my hand. What is it? A small bottle, but little larger than a vial. What is inside of it? A couple of dozen tablets. So far, so good. Do you remember the night when I aspired to commit suicide and you wouldn't let me?"

"Yes," answered the mate, looking sharply at his companion.

"Well, my thirst to murder myself was due to those tablets, or, more properly, to others like them that I had slipped down my neck. Too many of them wreck the reason. Harding, I'm a drug fiend."

"Ah!" muttered the mate, enlightened. "Victim of the drug habit. Dates well back, and it has warped my health all out of plumb and led me to do various fool things. I've been trying to reform for a month back, and the reason that my father took all his family on this voyage was that he believed it would help me to drop the habit forever if I had the salt breezes in my nostrils."

"Good idea."

"Didn't work with me, at first. I had a lapse from grace, stuffed myself with these devil-bunches, got a suicide mania on, and would have jumped into the sea but for you. Good job you did! I haven't taken a tablet since. By the way, this is my only supply. Watch us grow!"

With a slow motion Albert cast the bottle overboard. It fell in the water with a barely audible sound.

"Good-by to temptation. Do you know, Harding, I am the worst of all persons to risk fooling with drugs?"

"No. Why so?"

"Insanity in the family. Remember what my Aunt Annice has just done."

"Oh! So that's it?"

"She is bad. Queer case, tho, as it only crops out at times. Her notion to get you tangled up with that Geraldine was one proof, but I've just seen another. My aunt has come to me with a wild yarn that father intends to wreck the Sea Laugh. You see, he is chief owner, but aunt has a small share. Well, she claims that he wants to lose the vessel for dishonest gain. The craft itself is insured for just about its actual worth, but aunt will have it that the cargo is not what it purports to be, and that it's insured five hundred per cent over its value."

"I take it that you know this to be false," said the mate, quietly.

"I do know it. Not one grain of truth in the whole deranged dream. Poor Annice means well, but her mind isn't properly bulwarked."

"Naturally, she has not told anybody else."

Albert stepped nearer his companion. "Exactly what I want to know. She says she has told somebody else, first writing two notes to him. One was in a man's hand, or meant so to seem, while the other was in a woman's. Both warned him that the ship was to be scuttled, or something of that sort. She wouldn't say whom she told, but I was wondering—was it you, Harding?"

"Frankly, yes."

"Have you told my father?"

"No. One good reason was that I had not learned who this prophet of evil was. She kept herself veiled on the one occasion that I spoke to her. It was like this, you see."

He told the story from beginning to end.

"Poor old Annice!" Albert murmured. "Bad blood we Roxfords have got. I've sometimes been afraid that my father—but that's all moonshine. He is sound as hickory up aloft. All men just like him are a trifle eccentric, tho few will admit it. Yes, the skipper is all right. I can't say that of all of the family. By the way, Harding, my sisters are not bad humans, as folks go, but if you ever had an intention of marrying one of them, I should say, shift your helm. They've got the Roxford blood, you know."

"I understand."

"Maybe they will never lose their reason. I think I never shall, again, if I can keep from using drugs. Say, I'm tempted to tell you something."

"If you wish to, why, go ahead."

Albert again removed his hat, drew it thru his hands unconsciously and meditated deeply.

"I'll out with it, for it weighs on my conscience. A few years ago I used more drugs than now, and was in worse shape generally. It was then that I did something I've often been sorry for. Never mind what city it was in, nor just what I did, but I violated the law when loaded with my pet drug. Dipped my hands in crime, I did, and was almost nabbed by a policeman, but my father was hunting for me on the pier, and he got there just in time to hustle me away secretly."

The speaker paused, muttered a curse, and went on irritably.

"I wish I'd jumped off the pier and drowned my worthless self, but there was father to consider. I'll shorten my story. Another man who happened to be near was arrested, the guilt really lay between him and me, and father came to my rescue with loyal support. He identified the other fellow as the guilty one, and the other fellow was tried and sent to prison. Got several years, unfortunate wretch, and yet he was innocent. His name was Bosworth!"

CHAPTER XV.

REACHING what he believed to be the end, Albert leaned against the bulwark and sighed in consideration of his sins. To him it seemed that he was the leading figure in the conversation, for he

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little suspected how overpoweringly he had impressed his companion, having no reason to suppose that he had aroused personal interest.

He had done more than that. Bosworth, alias Harding, stood silent, stunned into speechless amazement. In all his hopes of the past that he would some time know the truth about his unjust accusation, trial and conviction, he had never imagined the possibility that he would ever stand and listen calmly to the story of the great wrong done to him, nor conceived of conditions that would make that calmness natural.

No warning had preceded the revelation, and the low-spoken conclusion was like a sudden physical blow.

The trouble of his past, the evil consequences of Captain Roxford's false testimony against him in court, the long days in prison—the horror of the recollection was so strong that he forgot all else, and had no mechanical impulse to speak.

Presently Albert stirred and stood erect.

"I reckon it's a crazy thing for me to tell you this," he went on, "but I had to do it. Something led me on to speak out."

The mate also moved, and his hand rubbed hard at his forehead.

"You don't answer," Albert added, after a pause.

"What shall I say?" Harding made the reply in a barely audible voice, a quiver in his tones. "Well," was the explanation, "that old case has been and is mighty hard on me, but, of course, it has been harder on Bosworth. That is, if he's alive. When I came here, this evening, I had no intention of confessing but now that I've done it I'll ask your advice on one point. It's a point that has been worrying me for years. Consider the case, Harding, and tell me if you would make public confession if you were in my place."

The mate came out of his stunned condition. Certain features of the horrible story were shaping themselves anew, and he felt like dealing with them.

"Do I understand," he asked, "that you don't know whether that man—that Bosworth—is alive?"

"I don't know."

"Have you not kept track of him?"

"No."

"Didn't you have that much curiosity as to the man you had sent to prison for years?"

"I just couldn't endure it!" Albert declared. "It was bad enough to have him suffer without my spying around, peering into his cell, wondering just when the last day of his sentence would be—why, I don't know even that, Harding. His term may have expired, or he may be dead."

"Would you know him if you were to see him?"

"Oh, yes, certainly! That is, I suppose so. I ought to, hadn't I? Still, I don't feel sure. It's an even gamble that I wouldn't know him from any other stray man. I should have committed his face to memory. Odd case, isn't it?"

Harding barely fought back an impulse to reach out, seize upon the man, beat him with revengeful fists and then fling him overboard. His mind was too clear for such work, and he tried for more valuable results.

"You have asked me whether I, if in your place, would make open confession. Yes, Roxford, I would confess, and at once. Do not let twenty-four hours pass by without signing a confession, and have it witnessed by several men."

"No, no!" said Albert, hastily. "Nothing of that sort aboard this ship. Am I to blacken my name in the estimation of anybody else here? Not I. When we get to port I'll do it—I guess—as it will ease my conscience."

Harding was not satisfied, and he tried with all possible diplomacy to change his companion's mind, but his words were lost. Really, such a recital of his misdeeds while on the voyage was not pleasant to contemplate, and the young man had some excuse. Whether he would ever tell the truth was a problem.

Unconscious of the tumult he had caused, he finally went below, leaving the mate to himself. As he lay in his berth, placidly yielding to sleep, he did not suspect how far from drowsiness was the mind of the man who walked the deck, watching over the safety of the ship. Bosworth, ex-convict, was in another chapter of his life-career.

The chapter was not finished that night, nor for several nights to come. Meanwhile, life in the Sea Laugh went on with outward placidity.

Harding continued his duty as mate, and nobody spoke to him about unusual things. Miss Annice, whenever in public, was calm and rational, and she probably wrote no more deranged letters. Down in his stateroom the nameless man from the ship Herman Hammond was continuing his fight for life Unconsciousness retained hold upon him, but Captain Roxford reported visible gain from day to day. That he would recover ultimately was the general opinion, tho this belief was based upon the captain's announcement.

The case seemed to obsess him. Having some knowledge of medicine, he was the amateur doctor of the vessel, but he also made himself a nurse to the stranger. The help that he was obliged to accept from the stewardess and the cook he seemed to resent, and preferred to be sole caretaker for the man as far as possible.

That was the situation at evening of a certain Wednesday that came as the Sea Laugh held its way. A faint excitement was visible in all quarters, caused by the knowledge that the ship, having made good time, was due at Rio at nightfall of the next day. The solid land called to the people in the ship, and they were glad to see the knots slip away.

Darkness fell, but the passengers remained on deck, glad to catch the cool breeze that drifted across the ship. Of the cabin party, Captain Roxford was the first to leave. Rising from the chair he had been occupying, he sighed audibly.

"Think I'll turn in," he remarked. "I feel a trifle weary, and I want to reach Rio in good shape. A full night below will fix me right."

This seemed to be a simple matter then, but it was not the last word. The night wore on, Harding was relieved by Crane at the end of the morning watch, and then, as the first mate went below and entered the cabin, the door of Roxford's room opened and he became visible.

"Be so good as to step in here, Harding," he said quietly.

"Certainly, sir," the mate replied.

The light was dim in the room, but clear enough to make the men easily visible to each other. Harding, looking, saw that in the captain's looks that caught and held his attention.

"Sorry to trouble you," the skipper went on, "but I have a legal matter to attend to a trifle later. It may be safe to wait until we fetch to Rio, but of that I can't be sure. Harding, I've got the disease that killed off the crew of the ship Herman Hammond!"

"What?"

"Fact! I really had proof of it all day yesterday, and more especially at bedtime, but I shut my eyes to the facts and did not believe. I've got that fatal affliction."

"Fatal? Why, the mate of the Hammond lives——"

"One case in many. Never mind that. I may live or die, but the odds are against me. The point that impresses me most is that the disease has been passed along to me. The question arises, has it been correctly diagnosed, or is it a contagious plague? If it's the latter, it is very fortunate for all concerned that we are so near to Rio. My belief is that there is nothing catching about it, that is, in the usual sense of the term."

"Have you been careless in nursing your patient?"

"Just what I think is the explanation. See!"

The captain held up a hand and showed a slight cut.

"I've often forgotten that little gash when busy over our unknown. Enough of that, tho. I've got the trouble, and the end may come suddenly, as Gideon said it came to some of his shipmates, I must keep that in mind. Harding, there is something I want off my conscience before I die, and possibly it is not safe to wait until we get to Rio. I want to sign a confession this morning, with witnesses to it in due form."

The mate, impressed by the words, was silent

"You are an educated man," Roxford resumed, "and writing it out will be easy for you. Besides yourself I'll have Nathan Crane and two of the sailors for witnesses. Fact is, I want to keep this from my women folks for now. Under strong mental pressure I did a villainous thing, a few years back—under great pressure, you understand. Still, that didn't help poor Bosworth."

Still the mate remained silent, and the captain, looking downward, did not notice his strange expression.

"I did it to save my son. Albert was addicted to drugs, and at one time he lost his head and committed a crime. I was near, I saw it, and was known to have seen it. I had to identify one of two men. I favored my son and passed him by, and—I falsely identified a man named Bosworth, and sent him to prison for two years."

Roxford made a sudden gesture, expressive of keen mental feeling.

The Silver Tongued Orator of Minnesota, Charles A. Towne, Former United States Senator

Late Member of Congress from New York—Nominated for Vice-President

Recommends Nuxated Iron to All Who Feel the Need of Renewed Energy

Says That Henceforth He Shall Not Be Without It

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Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason says the results he obtained from its use in his own case were so beneficial that he feels it should be made known to every nervous, run-down man, woman and child. The famous "Cyclone" Davis, Member of the 64th United States Congress, says the effect of Nuxated Iron on him was almost magical, that after taking it, nothing seemed to tire him out no matter how strenuous it might be. Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, and former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, says Nuxated Iron has proven through his own tests of it to excel any preparation he has ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders.

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, says he has never before recommended any remedy to the public, but that in the case of Nuxated Iron he would feel he were remiss in his duty not to mention it. Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author, says that in his recent talks to physicians on the grave and serious consequences of iron deficiency in the blood of American women he has strongly emphasized the fact that doctors should prescribe more organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for their weak, run-down, nervous, haggard-looking patients. Ty Cobb, the greatest baseball batter of all time, took it to help give him renewed energy and great staying power. No matter what anybody says, you could not, at this day, get such prominent men to endorse a remedy that has no value—doctors, lawyers, politicians, athletes—a great array.

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston Physician who has studied both in this country and great European Medical Institutions, said: "Nuxated Iron is a wonderful remedy. Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty, and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health: at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in—now at 50, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak and run-down instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants, and alcoholic beverages, I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases, and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real, true cause which started their disease was nothing more or less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood. Thousands of people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which has been used by Former United States Senator Towne with such surprising results, and which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron, that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

What Senator Towne Says:

"As a member of Congress from New York, as a member of Congress and Senator from Minnesota, as participant in political campaigns and candidate for Vice-President, my nervous energy and reserve force were tremendously drawn upon. That I survived these trials and came into advanced middle life with the elasticity and strength of a boy is unquestionably due to the rigorous attention

I have paid to the proper care of my body. Recently I have been taking Nuxated Iron and have found it of the greatest benefit as a tonic and regulative. Henceforth I shall not be without it. I am in a position to testify for the advantage of others, to the remarkable and immediate helpfulness of this remedy, and I unhesitatingly recommend Nuxated Iron to all who feel the need of renewed energy and the regularity of bodily functions.

Charles A. Towne

Minnesota's Man of Mark

Former United States Senator, Charles A. Towne, graduated from the University of Michigan, twice elected member of the United States Congress, served in the United States Senate, nominated for Vice-President, takes Nuxated Iron; now recommends it to all who feel the need of renewed energy.

"Think what a false step will do for a man. To save Albert then I ruined Bosworth's life, and now I must tell the truth to keep my mind from being wrecked by my conscience. Better that I'd told the truth at the beginning. Miserable wretch that I am!"

He moved aside roughly.

"Don't say a word, Harding!" he directed. "I can't stand it. Of course it is impossible for you to realize what poor Bosworth suffered, so we will pass that by. Sit down here and write from my dictation; after which we will have the other witnesses in. Don't say a word. Now write what I tell you."

Harding wrote, and, a little later, Nathan Crane and two sailors were briefly in the captain's room. What was done there nobody but themselves knew, and they were pledged to silence.

The captain was courageous, and he kept up until noon. Even when he went to his berth, at that hour, only Harding knew what was the matter with him, and the Sea Laugh drew nearer to its port without any alarm aboard.

The command had devolved upon the first mate, and he navigated the ship with extreme care that almost forced all other things into the background. The loftier buildings of Rio lay clearly defined against the sky when the stewardess came to the mate with an odd look on her face.

"Sir," she announced, "that strange man below, the officer from the Herman Hammond, is better. He is conscious, and has asked to see the commander of this ship."

"Good!" Harding replied. "I'll take a look at him at once."

"He has given his name, sir."

"Oh! Has he?" was the careless answer. "What is it?"

"He says he is named Loren F. Harding!"

The mate started back, beset by a new and startling revelation.

"Say that again, will you?" he finally managed to utter. "Harding, eh? An odd coincidence, but this ship has been full of such things ever since we left our home port. That will do, stewardess. I'll

(Continued on Page 19.)

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Chicago Ledger

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READERS WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Minority Rule—That of the first baby.

Fortune smiles on few and laughs at many.

Nature heals—but the doctor makes out the bill.

Women with pretty teeth will laugh at any joke.

In order to rise with the lark avoid the midnight swallows.

People who have no sense of humor are very funny at times.

Trouble is the most thoro teacher in the school of experience.

Prudence and industry are the principal ingredients in good luck.

Many a man would never be missed if his wife didn't throw things at him.

Only a man who is never ill wonders how doctors manage to make a living.

When a man's trousers bag at the knees they seldom bag at the pockets.

The man who would enjoy the music of a band must keep up with the procession.

The man who looks out for difficulties will find two where he expected only one.

You can depend upon a man who isn't afraid to say "I don't know" occasionally.

Most of our mistakes would never be noticed if we did not call attention to them.

A girl never objects to the cold treatment of a young man who orders ice cream.

A woman is willing to give a man advice on any subject except the art of shaving.

Many a man has made his debut on the broad road to ruin thru the narrow side door.

When a woman gets a love letter from her husband she appreciates it if it has a check in it.

Every mother knows that all the bad children in the neighborhood belong to the neighbors.

Never argue with a man who talks loud. You couldn't convince him in a thousand years.

It's a man's nature to crave power, and if he can't bully another man or a dog he gets married.

It is easier to keep a good-for-nothing dog in the house than it is to keep the wolf from the door.

Don't call a big, strong man a liar; it is cheaper to hire some other fellow to break the news to him.

If a man hoards riches and enjoys them not, he is a fit companion for the donkey that dines on thistles when grass is plenty.

War and Women

FORWARD! MARCH!

Blessings on thee, khaki man,
With your summer's coat of tan!
Bronzed and dusty, down the road,
So your father one time strode.

Forward! March! To do or die!
"Liberty" your battle cry
Eyes ahead, nor backward glance,
God be with you, boy, in France.

—J. F. B.

War and Fashions.

Some sapient observer of our sex announced a few years ago, in the days of our bondage, that the only thing that kept women down and insured the superiority of men was our pocketless state, says Madame X. in the Chicago Tribune. We are no longer crippled by having to tuck our handkerchiefs in our belts, hold our purses in our hands, or leave our keys, letters, and card cases on any chance ledge. We now have pockets galore on coats, blouses, and skirts. And, like the men, we frequently lose our belongings in these pockets.

This is gain number one. Gain number two is the continued shortness of skirts, in spite of a determinted effort on the part of dressmakers and manufacturers of dress goods to prescribe longer ones last spring. Women—especially young ones with pretty feet—would have none of them. Incidentally, this added some $10,000,000 to the leather dealers' pockets by continuing the vogue for extra high shoes and boots, and reduced to an almost equal amount the gains of the dress goods manufacturers.

Trousers for women, decidedly to the fore in Canada, England, and France, have not as yet made much of a hit in this country. But we venture to prophesy that by this time next year, if the war lasts as long as that, these bifurcated garments will be in general use in this country, both among women in industry and their more prosperous, but scarcely less industrious sisters who work in gardens, in war relief work, in canning, and other forms of production and conservation. The French workman's overalls, neatly buttoned around the lower calf and ankle, are by no means unbecoming to a shapely form. Riding knickerbockers have already found great favor among women.

Gain number three is the corsetless young woman. Older women are more reluctant to discard this hitherto indispensable part of our wardrobe. From the time of Pericles women have doted on some form of metal fence work confining their waists.

Coincident with great wars, however, they have discarded these unnatural restraints and have allowed their figures to fall into natural lines. When the Napoleonic wars had decimated French manhood and healthy mothers were especially necessary to the renewal of the vigor of France, the loose, flowing style known as the Empire gown came into favor, replacing the stiff stays and artificial fashions of the Louis XVI. period and the stilted short-lived Directoire style.

Once more France, which now, as then, sets the fashions for the feminine world, feels the need of restoring and renewing her population and, consciously or otherwise has issued the edict for a loose, wholesome, graceful style of dress which includes the short skirt, the light, soft material, and the unrestrained waist line with the gown hanging easily from the shoulders.

The one drawback to the mode is the accompanying tendency of young women to slouch, with rounded shoulders, head forward, chest in, stomach out, and a strong suggestion of the reverered letter S in their outline. That this is deliberate is evidenced by the answer of a young miss of 17 whose mother asked her two daughters why they didn't sit and stand with a straight spine as do all our young soldier boys.

"Oh, we wouldn't think of doing so. It isn't the fashion."

THE GIRL LEFT BEHIND.

Going abroad to engage in war relief work is a splendid thing for women to do; but under some circumstances the girl who remains behind is performing a much more sacrificial act.

Some time ago a young woman sailed from an American port bound for "somewhere in France." Before her departure she was feted considerably, and on every hand one heard admiration expressed for this girl, who had sufficient courage to give up a paying position for the uncertainties of this new venture. And those who did not know even went so far as to contrast her with another young woman, one of her friends, who had announced her intention of sticking to her present job.

According to the facts in the case, however, both of these girls contributed to the support of their families. The girl who sailed was, by giving up her position, depriving her family of a much-needed stipend. She who was left felt herself unable to go for that very reason. Her part is certainly less spectacular, but to which do you think belongs the credit?

There is much for every one to do in this country, and only too great a rush of incompetents to the other side. To enlist as a Red Cross nurse sounds very fine, and many girls, carried away by the excitement of the moment, rush in as assistant nurses with visions of smoothing the fevered brow of a wounded hero, of reading to him, of tenderly binding up his arm or of taking his dying message, only to find when they are actually in the thick of it and there is no going back, that, as Elizabeth Frazer told so many when she was here some weeks ago, being an assistant nurse often means carrying out amputated limbs, changing bed linen and performing other more sickening tasks for fourteen or more hours at a stretch, and often without a word of gratitude or encouragement from any one.

As some one has said, pretty faces are not curative agents, nor will sympathetic temperament alleviate pain.

The girl whose means will allow her to do so, and for whom nursing is not just a romantic venture, should sign up for a course of training. She can be used at the front. But she whose circumstances will not permit her to board the first boat is performing just as great a service by staying at home and "doing her bit," unheroic as it may seem to be.

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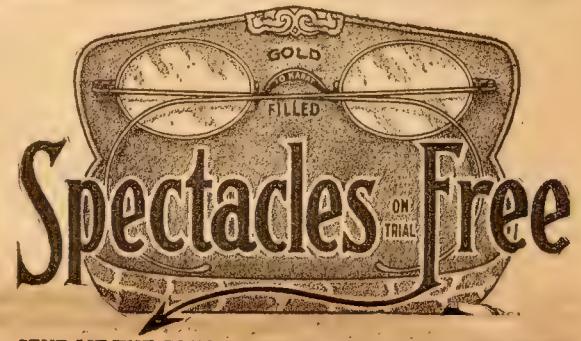

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All sensible men and women know that poor glasses are worse than none at all. You have probably bought pair after pair of glasses that didn't enable you to see perfectly—yet you have kept right on buying, hoping to get a pair that would be just right for you.

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Fill out and mail the coupon now. Surely your eyes are worth the two-cent stamp it costs to send the coupon to us.

IMPORTANT

Hold this paper about 13 inches from your eyes and see which of the letters you can read. First see how many you can read with both eyes. Then shut your left eye and see how many you can read with your right eye. After that shut your right eye and see how many you can read with your left eye. Make this test without your glasses, if you now wear them. Mark in the below coupon which letters you can read with both eyes, your right eye and your left eye. If you can't read any of the letters, say so.

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How old are you?.....How many years have you used glasses (if any)?.....

Which is the smallest letter you can read in test chart at 13 inches with (both eyes).....right eye.....left eye.....?

Name .....

Post Office.....

Rural Route.....Box No.....State.....

Motion Picture Boys

Or, On a Camera Hunt

By Anthony J. Wayne

[Copyright 1917 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 33, August 18. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XI

THE VALLEY OF DESOLATION.

ONLY for the fact of Tom being so eager to get at his work again, they might have decided to carry the little family far along the road toward their destination. They were taken aboard, and rode with Wally and Tom as far as the home of Alec's relatives, where they said good-by, thanking their young benefactors with tears in their eyes and trudging bravely onward. That little group was doubtless representative of a vast gathering of fugitives who, having lost all their wordly possessions in the flood, tried to face the future with confidence.

Alec had seen them coming, and was at the gate to greet them. Very naturally he had conceived a great affection for his new friends. The clever way in which they had kept him from disaster quite won his heart. He yearned to accompany them, upon hearing what they intended doing, as they put the horses in the stable.

"Perhaps I might be of some use to you, because I'm very strong, and could carry the camera, and anything else you wanted me to," he went on to say, boldly; "for I'd like to see a whole lot more of you, and listen to you talk. I've never seen motion pictures taken, and would be glad of the chance. Please say I may come along."

Wally looked toward Tom, who, after considering a brief time, nodded his head.

"All right, Alec, you can come if you want to," said Wally. "Just as a job, we can make use of you in lots of ways. And if you ever see motion pictures on the screen you'll enjoy them the more because of knowing how they are taken."

Alec had no trouble securing permission from his father to spend some little time in the company of his new friends. All of them had taken a great liking for Wally and Tom; besides, the Saunders family already rested under heavy obligation toward the pair, and gladly accepted the opportunity to repay their debt in part. So it was all arranged, and when Wally and his chum started forth, Alec carried his share of the burden, tho the precious camera was not yet trusted in his keeping.

Once again did they descend into the valley to look for strange sights calculated to show what the mighty force exerted by that rushing tide had accomplished.

One thing they noted almost immediately, which was that the water passing thru the valley was hardly more than a small stream. The vast reservoir had exhausted its contents, at least as far down as the break extended; and no further damage might be expected.

Wally sighed when Tom made a remark to that effect.

"The trouble is," he went on to say, with a queer little catch in his voice suggestive of pity, "there is nothing more to injure in all the length of this stretch. Every living thing is wiped out; houses carried away; farms ruined for years, and the whole country laid in waste. They used to call it Happy Valley, but if any one wanted to speak of it as we see it now, they'd have to dub it the Valley of Desolation."

As far as they could see, on every hand, it was a barren wilderness. Even one of those sandy deserts in the Far Southwest would look cheerful alongside that flood-swept place, because at least it would appear in its natural guise, whereas the mud and piled-up debris to be seen in every quarter told of the catastrophe that had so lately descended upon this once joyous community.

It was not long before Tom discovered something that appealed to his fancy, and which he believed would add to the interest of his collection of startling views. Alec evinced great eagerness to lend a helping hand, and made himself very useful, so that the others found no cause to regret giving him permission to accompany them on their mission.

They did not hurry at all, believing that with the whole day ahead of them, and plenty of astonishing sights to pass judgment on, they should conserve their powers of endurance. It was no easy task getting around at that. The ground was slippery, with all sorts of obstructions that forced them to make little or extended detours.

In this fashion then did they put in the entire morning. Tom was highly gratified with the measure of success that attended his efforts. Even if he stopped work at high noon he believed he would be in possession of a series of pictures that would give a most accurate description of the valley tragedy.

Some of these were most grewsome, tho fortunately the boys did not come on a single human being whose life had been taken. Sometimes they viewed a great accumulation of mud and remnants of former dwellings with a feeling akin to awe, wondering whether the mass concealed a ghastly secret. They were quite willing to leave the solution of the mystery to those searchers who later on would be scouring the entire region, particularly if certain people turned out missing.

When the middle of the day came they found a comfortable place where a fire could be started, and prepared to have something to eat. In fact, Wally and Tom had seen to it that material for a decent camp dinner was fetched along, partly because they wished Alec to experience the delight of partaking of such a feast. He seemed to be enjoying himself hugely. For the time being all thought of the disaster that had overtaken his folks was banished from his mind, such is the buoyancy of boyhood, and his whole thought was centered on his novel experiences.

Afterward they started on again, meaning to cover some further territory before calling the job off. Tom began to see the end of his supply of film; not that he had been at all prodigal, but so many wonderful pictures tempted him that he had been unable to resist the inclination to devote a few yards of the roll to taking them. Perhaps the censor might drop out some of his product in going over the entire output, and Tom wished to have enough to cover the ground.

"I believe I've just got enough left for one more scene," he finally admitted.

It was now three in the afternoon, Wally, to tell the truth, heard this with ill-concealed satisfaction. The fact was that he had become rather tired of seeing so much desolation, and would welcome a change to green fields and houses and signs of happiness.

"The fact is," he calmly admitted, when Tom looked surprised to notice the smile on his face, "we've run across so many defunct horses, cows, chickens and pigs that it makes me feel as tho we were passing thru a great big graveyard, or else the suburb of a vast fertilizer establishment. And you can't find a last subject to handle any too soon to suit me, my boy. Tired as I am, I'll climb the side of the ridge with a light heart, because I'll be heading toward God's own country, and shaking the dust of the Valley of Desolation from my shoes."

"That sounds pretty fine, Wally, but you're taking too much poetic license. I'd like to see any dust down here, where it's all mud, with pools of water, and piled-up trunks of trees, mixed with all sorts of household stuff. But I'll agree with you that it's sort of depressing on a fellow's spirits, and I'll be glad to make a change of base."

Wally evinced a sudden renewed interest in the search for a fitting windup of the trip in the shape of a stunning picture different from anything they had thus far been able to secure. He suggested half a dozen scenes in rapid succession, but Tom absolutely declined to allow himself to be hurried.

"You see I've taken so many," he explained, "that it's getting harder and harder to find something different. Tell you what I'll do, Wally—limit myself to just fifteen minutes by the watch. If we fail to run across anything in that time I'll be willing to call it off, and save the remnant of film I've still got. Who knows but what I may need it later on? Perhaps it's good policy to always have something over for an emergency."

"Sounds good to me," asserted the other, "and by degrees you'll get on to all the wrinkles of the game. If I was a camera man, which I am not, I believe I'd have that for my slogan—always keep a bit of film for something that might come up suddenly. A hunter hesitates to use his last cartridge for fear he'll need it badly later on. And according to my notion you motion picture handlers of the camera are real hunters, your game all manner of striking pictures that come along sometimes most unexpectedly."

The time passed, and when Wally gravely announced that the limit had arrived, Tom dutifully threw up his hands.

"We'll start to climb right away then, boys," he remarked, with a ring of actual relief in his voice.

All of them were pretty tired, but climbing the side of the slope seemed more or less of a pleasure after all that floundering around in the mud, and tumbling over unlimited obstacles.

They were scratched and bruised and muddy, but in spite of all this none of them uttered any complaint. It was all in the line of business, and the full measure of success that had been their portion compensated them for what misery they had endured. Even Alec laughed, and declared he had had the time of his life.

"If ever I get half a chance," he asserted boldly, "I want to take up this sort of business. I've always had a taste for photography, you see, and this just strikes me as the boss thing. I'll never be satisfied till I see how your pictures turn out, and that's a fact."

"All right, Alec," Wally told him. "If the time ever comes when this series of reels is to be shown at Greenville, which will be as soon as I can arrange it, I promise to send you a railroad ticket to visit us, and see what we've captured for our maiden effort. Tom says he's satisfied it'll turn out great, and I'm ready to believe in his judgment. So please remember to remind me of my promise when you happen to write."

"Oh! That's sure to be pretty soon," said the delighted Alec, whose eyes were shining with joy; it had certainly been a red letter day in his young life when those two lads discovered him clinging to the face of the rocky cliff, and wasted no time in effecting his rescue.

Tom and Wally had been talking matters over, and arrived at the conclusion that since their supply of film was at low ebb it would be just as well they should call the expedition off, and head back home again. Tom was willing to get his work rushed, and the exposed films developed, so they could be shown speedily, while the catastrophe of Happy Valley was still fresh in the minds of the people.

"We'll go to the city right away after we get home," Wally told him, "and see about the balance of the work. You've

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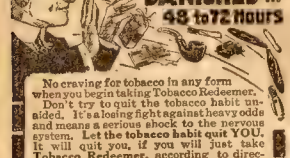

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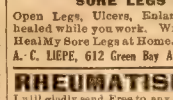

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done your part, and it's up to the best man in the trade to handle those films, so as to bring out every little point possible. If money will help along it's yours for the asking. Nothing must be left to chance, for like as not no one will ever again have an opportunity to be on hand when a reservoir retaining wall gives way, at least with a motion picture camera in action. The more I think about it the more I feel that we were the lucky ones to be Johnny-on-the-spot."

It was half-past 3 when they arrived at the house. Alec's relatives again tried to persuade the two boys to spend the night with them, but without success.

"You see we have a car stalled on the road some miles away from here," explained Wally. "I've been thinking it all over, and believe I know how I can get the engine to work again. So we mean to head that way, and return this team to the owner, if I succeed in coaxing my motor to be good again. After that it is up to us to head for home, and we ought to get there long before midnight, if everything goes well. Thank you very much for the invitation, tho, folks."

"And," remarked Tom, "we expect to meet you all again later on, because we mean to run up here to see how things look when the people who own property down below get started to building again."

"I'm afraid the valley will never be what it was, even after years have passed," Alec's father remarked, with a tinge of regret in his voice, for he had lost a snug home place in the general ruin that had come upon the region. "Many of those washed out will leave the place for good, after such a scare. They will never be ready to trust that dam again; if it failed once, it may again, and every clap of thunder would act upon their nerves so as to make wrecks of them. That's the way I feel about it, at least. After this the upland will be my home."

The team having been made ready, and good-bys said, the young motion picture lads started off. They were now on the homeward road, and felt all the satisfaction that thrills the veins of victors. Considering that this was their initial work along the line Tom had chosen as his life pursuit, they believed they had reason to congratulate themselves on the measure of success that had been meted out to them.

When they were well on the way, they talked of home and the loved ones there, for it really seemed as if they had been absent for weeks instead of days, so much had happened since last they looked upon the well remembered houses and church spires of Greenville.

"Supposing we can't get the car to going, what then?" asked Tom.

"Oh, I've got it all figured out to a fraction," his comrade assured him, "and I'm so certain of managing it that I want you to return the team, and settle with the owner while I'm working with the motor. By the time you get back I may have things fixed in shape to make a start, and at the worst it won't be long. There comes a team, and those aboard seem to be in something of a hurry, too, to judge by the way they are using the whip on the horses. Three men aboard, one of them the driver, and the others look like engineers or something of that sort, for I can see they wear leather leggings, and there's something like surveyors' tools cropping up from the bed of the wagon."

Tom uttered a startled ejaculation.

"Why, Wally, I know what they must be!" he declared, with considerable emotion. "Some concern has sent its camera men up here to secure a series of pictures showing the result of the terrible flood after the dam broke. That's generally what you see thrown on the screen, you know, the after effects of the disaster. Mine will be the very first picture of the happening itself. No use trying to hide our camera and stuff, because they are pointing this way, and have already discovered what we are. But above all things, don't mention a word about our having been there when the thing happened. I don't just like their looks, and they might be mad enough at being beaten at their game to do something to destroy all our work."

"They'd have to walk over my body first; but I'll remember, and keep mum," Wally promised, and nothing further could be said, for the others were now close at hand.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

THE two men in the other wagon looked curiously at Wally and Tom. Possibly they were more or less acquainted with many camera men, and wondered who these strangers at the business could be.

"Looks like you beat us to the game, young fellows," one of them remarked. "Just like our luck to be off on another run when this big thing happened; but we'll cover the ground thoroly, and find a lot of stunners that'd be likely to slip past others. I suppose now you've taken the broken dam, and been down along the washed-out valley, to judge from the dried mud you're carrying along?"

"Why, yes, we picked up a few good pictures, we think," admitted Wally, "tho as we're green to the business I suppose we've missed heaps that you'll glimpse. But it's hard work getting around down there, and we've had all we want of it. We're on the way back home now, you see."

The man chuckled as tho he anticipated that the result of the boys' labors would be insignificant; because it takes more or less genius to be a clever camera man, and every one who thinks he has a call in that particular quarter is not chosen. Miles and miles of costly film go to waste every month thru amateurs trying to make good as camera operators in the field.

"Oh, well, you've had your fun, and must expect to pay the piper. This isn't the business for boys to succeed in, as you'll learn in time, when you've sunk your money, and secured only some mediocre pictures not worth showing on the screen. Here's my card, boys. Perhaps you might feel disposed to send your films on after they're developed. If you chance to have anything worth while that's different from those we get, I might make you an offer for the same that would help you out in expenses."

Wally took the card.

"That's very kind of you, sir," he remarked humbly, "but we hardly expect that we've been able to get any remarkable results, because this is really our first attempt, you see. We hope you'll cover the ground, and find the things we missed."

"Oh, we'll do that all right, depend on it! But we must be on our way to the dam first of all, to take a few views of the wreck before we follow the course of the flood down the valley. So-long, boys!"

With a flirt of the hand and a look of commiseration as well as superiority, the camera man gave the word to the driver, and away the team went on a gallop, for apparently they wished to make up for loss of time.

Tom was grumbling half to himself as Wally started their own team.

"One of the most conceited chaps I've ever run across, and that's a fact, Wally. He seems to think he stands in a class by himself, and that boys don't amount to much, anyway. Say, wouldn't he look surprised, tho, if he knew that we were on hand, and actually caught the bursting of the reservoir dam? It would make him look sheepish; but not for worlds would I have told him. He'll learn all about it later on when these pictures of ours are being exhibited all over the land in thousands of playhouses."

"Well, he may pick up the information a heap sooner than that, I'm afraid," observed Wally, significantly.

"Now what can you mean by that?" demanded Tom, instantly.

"You heard him saying they were heading for the reservoir, so as to first of all take the broken wall, didn't you, Tom?"

"Why, yes, but—oh, I see now what you think, Wally! They may ask questions about us, and in that way hear we were there before the break came, taking pictures of the wall, and the lake back of it—yes, and that we worked our camera on the second the wall began to bulge, and then burst. Whew! I'd give something to see that man's face when he learns that! It'll be a terrible come-down for him, let me tell you."

"I'm wondering," continued Wally, "whether perhaps we may see them again today, if we're delayed too long by my car."

"Do you think they'd come back again, and try to overhaul us, Wally?"

"Stop and think what it would mean to them if they could make some arrangement with us to gain possession of our reels containing those priceless films. Or if we declined to sell them perhaps in revenge they might smash everything, and then say it was just an ordinary accident on the road, where two vehicles happened to come into collision."

Tom looked serious now. In imagination he could see those two sturdy camera men struggling with himself and companion for the possession of the valuable films. It made Tom writhe with mingled feelings of afarm and anger.

"I wish now I'd done what I was tempted to do in the first place," he grumbled.

"What was that?" asked Wally.

"I was on the point of asking you to fetch along a gun of some kind from your collection, Wally. Think what it'd be worth, if those men really come on us and act abusive. We could hold them off, and make them clear out in no time. As it is we're almost helpless, and would have to resort to some trick so as to beat them at their game."

Wally laughed at hearing his chum talk in this strain.

"Oh, the chances are we'll have the car all fixed, and be on our way long before they can get back again, Tom, so don't borrow trouble."

Altho Wally talked in this confident tone, and made light of the peril, it might have been noticed that he used the whip frequently after that, as tho desirous of getting more speed out of the horses. He, too, had taken an instinctive dislike to the camera man, who seemed a rough fellow, with a curl to his lip that impressed both lads unfavorably; they set him down as overbearing by nature, a bully accustomed to driving others with whom he came in contact while pursuing his vocation in the field.

Finally they arrived at the stranded car, which was found to be just about as they left it. The heavy rain had been kept out by reason of the curtains which Wally had carefully buttoned down before abandoning the "tin Lizzie," as he was pleased to say frequently when referring to his property.

First of all Wally removed the coverings so that he could work unobstructed, after which he took a good look at the engine. Tom hovered close by, anxiously waiting to hear the report, and now and then casting a look of ill-concealed apprehension along the road.

"Better take the stuff out of the wagon and stow it aboard the car, Tom," Wally presently advised. "After you've done that I'll ask you to return the rig to our good friend, and here's the money as agreed on to pay for its hire. Then come back right away. Perhaps I may be ready for a start by the time you arrive."

Tom did not attempt to argue the matter. Possibly he might have thought it would be wiser for them to keep the team until it was found that the engine was going to respond to the labor of its owner; but Wally seemed so very sure of success that he (Tom) kept his peace, and did as he was told.

Having made the transfer of the luggage he started off with the wagon and horses. Some fifteen minutes later he came along the road again, half running. Wally was still hard at work, a fact Tom noted with considerable apprehension.

"Oh! Haven't you mastered it yet?" he gasped, as he came up.

"I'm getting there and expect to have things working in a jiffy now," was the reply the perspiring Wally made. Then,

(Continued on Page 19.)

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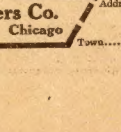

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PEPPERS

MRS. JACK.

Jack saw her nightly in his dreams
In peerless grace, his bride;
And daylight fancies brought him gleams
Of maiden beauty in her pride;
Divinely tall, her locks of gold
A fillet vainly strove to hold;
Beneath her hair eyes calmly true
Returned the sky's unfathomed hue.

Both Juno and Minerva gave
Their every charm to make her fair,
Jack worshiped her; he did not rave;
A goddess claims a reverence rare.
And if she sat, or if she walked,
In silence stood, or if she talked,
Her like had never been; supreme,
The stately blossom of his dream.

Now Jack, he was my dearest friend—
Yet pals can wear one's patience bare,
I vowed our friendship soon must end
If he limned on his visioned fair.
I still recall the injured look
Jack shot as I resumed my book—
And yet, upon the following day
He bored me in the same old way.

All this was just two years ago,
Jack stayed in town, I went away.
We neither wrote. 'Tis often so,
We met again the other day;
And Jack had wed. His Juno wife?
I never stared so in my life;
Gold-haired goddess? Oh, good lack—
A black-eyed midget, Mrs. Jack.

HOPELESS.

There is in the employ of a Brooklyn woman an Irish cook who has managed to break nearly every variety of article that the household contains. The mistress' patience reached its limit recently when she discovered that the cook had broken the thermometer that hung in the dining-room.

"Well, well," sighed the lady of the house, in a resigned way, "you've managed to break even the thermometer, haven't you?"

Whereupon, in a tone equally resigned, the cook said: "Yis, mum; and now we'll have to take the weather just as it comes, won't we?"

ITS PLACE.

"Are you an advocate of prohibition?" asked the lady with the Bryanesque chin.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the individual with the irrigated, carmine-colored eyes. "I advocate prohibition, in its proper place."

"In its proper place? What do you mean, sir?" she demanded suspiciously.

"I mean, ma'am," he answered, "at least twenty miles from any human habitation, ma'am."

WELL POSTED.

An Irishman out of work applied to the boss of a repair shop in Detroit. When the Celt had stated his qualifications for a "job" the superintendent began quizzing him a bit. Starting quite at random, he asked:

"Do you know anything about carpentry?"

"Sure."

"Do you know how to make a Venetian blind?"

"Sure, I'd poke me chisel in his eye."

APPRECIATION.

One of the new baronets, Sir Charles Mathews, is said to be the only member of the English bar who ever managed to draw tears from the judge before whom he was pleading. His old rival in many criminal cases, Mr. C. F. Gill, K. C., never lady visitor some of the priceless treasures of which he is the custodian, but for a long time nothing seemed to interest her very much.

Then suddenly he noticed a change. Her face lighted up and she leaned forward.

"What is it, madam?" asked Sir Frederick, gratified at this tardy sign of awakening appreciation. "Pray do not hesitate to ask if there is anything you would like to know."

"So good of you!" chirruped the lady. "I wish you would tell me what brand of blacklead you use on those iron ventilators that are let into the floor. We have the same sort of things at my house, but my maids never get them to shine half so brilliantly."

RATHER DRAFTY.

American people have a very high appreciation of the humor of Englishmen, and have been specially tickled by a story Colonel Cody used to tell. He said that some years ago an Englishman who had never been in the West before was his guest. They were riding thru a Rocky Mountain canyon one day, when suddenly a tremendous gust of wind came swooping down upon them and he eagerly inquired: "Do you think that I will have time to get a soda before the train starts?"

"Oh, yes," answered the conductor.

"But suppose," suggested the thirsty passenger, "that the train should go on without me?"

"We can easily fix that," promptly replied the conductor. "I will go along and have one with you."

DISCOVERING COLUMBUS.

During the recent campaign a Tammany leader on the East Side, a self-made man and one not entirely completed yet in some respects, was addressing a mass meeting of Italian-born voters on behalf of the Democratic ticket.

"Gintlemen and fellow citizens," he began, "I deem it an honor to be permitted to address you upon the issues of the day. I have always had a deep admiration for your native land. I vinerate the mimory of that great, that noble Eyetalian who was the original and first discoverer of this here land of ours.

"Why, gintlemen, at me mother's knee I was taught to sing that inspirin' song: 'Columbus, the Jim of the Ocean'!"

Whereupon there was loud applause.

GETTING-OFF PLACES.

A Philadelphia divine was entertaining a couple of clergymen from New York at dinner. The guests spoke in praise of a sermon their host had delivered the Sunday before. The host's son was at the table, and one of the New York clergymen said to him: "My lad, what did you think of your father's sermon?"

"I guess it was very good," said the boy, "but there were three mighty fine places where he could have stopped."

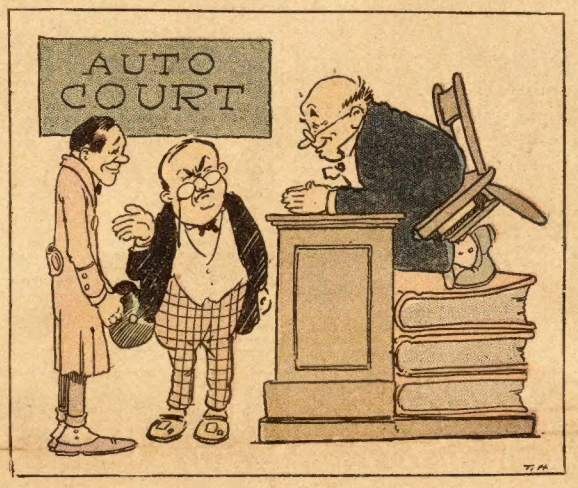
DOUBLE PRAISE.

William Henry had become greatly puffed up over the fact that his wife was telling the neighbors that she had a model husband. He bored the boys in the office about it, until one of them called him to one side and suggested that he should look up the definition of the word "model." William Henry took down the dictionary and read: "Model—a small imitation of the real thing."

POOR JUDGMENT.

The driver of a small car speeded out of a cross-street and struck the street car squarely amidships. The street car conductor got off to investigate and collect evidence for his official report.

"What's the matter with you?" the conductor asked the driver, "don't you know you can't run under my car with your top up?"



Prosecutor—"The facts are plain, your honor! This man took the car without permission and drove it eighty miles."
Judge—"Discharged! He has suffered enough. I once owned the car."

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achieved this feat, altho a supreme master of the harrowing methods formerly followed by counsel. Mr. Gill was once called upon by the judge at Lewes Assizes to defend a navvy charged with killing his wife.

"His eloquence," relates an eye-witness, "had such an effect upon the jury that seven of them burst into tears. At this moment the prisoner nudged a warder sitting by him and said, 'Who's that bloke?' 'Why,' said the warder, 'he's the finest mouthpiece on the circuit; you're very lucky to have got him.' 'Dismal beggar!' said the prisoner."

A TRIBUTE.

When Julia Ward Howe died memorial services in her honor were held at San Francisco, and the local literary colony attended practically en masse to pay by their presence a tribute to the writer.

A municipal officer was asked to preside. Dressed in his long frock coat and his broad white tie, he advanced to the edge of the platform to launch the exercises and introduce the principal eulogist. He bowed low and spoke as follows:

"Your attendance here, ladies and gents, in such great numbers shows San Francisco's appreciation of good literature. This meeting is a great testimonial to the immortal author of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'—the late Julia Ward Howard!"

THE SISTER'S REPLY.

He was a young subaltern. One evening the Sister had just finished making him comfortable for the night, and before going off duty asked: "Is there anything I can do for you before I leave?"

Dear little Two Stars replied: "Well, yes! I should like very much to be kissed good night."

Sister rustled to the door. "Just wait till I call the orderly," she said. "He does all the rough work here."

WHAT SHE WANTED TO KNOW.

Sir Frederick Kenyon, the director of the British Museum, has had all sorts of funny experiences with visitors there.

Once he was showing a distinguished actually carried the Englishman clean off the wagon-seat. After he had been picked up he combed the sand and gravel out of his whiskers and said:

"I say! I think you overdo ventilation in this country!"

UNCONVINCED.

A student assistant, engaged in reading the shelves at the public library, was accosted by a primly dressed, middle-aged woman who said that she had finished reading the last of Laura Jean Libbey's writings, and that she should like something just as good. The young assistant, unable for the moment to think of Laura Jean Libbey's equal, hastily scanned the shelf on which she was working and, choosing a book, offered it to the applicant, saying:

"Perhaps you would like this, 'A Kentucky Cardinal.'"

"No," was the reply. "I don't care for theological works."

"But," explained the kindly assistant, with needless enthusiasm, "this cardinal was a bird."

"That would not recommend him to me," said the woman, moving haughtily away.

AN UNFAIR QUESTION.

The employer of a Polish maid who has learned to speak English has told the Philadelphia Public Ledger of her experiences with the telephone. After its use was explained to her she was eager to answer every call. One day a ring came and she jumped to the instrument.

"Hello!" came from the receiver.

"Hello!" answered the girl, flushed with pride at being able to give the proper answer.

"Who is this?" continued the voice.

"I don't know!" exclaimed the maid. "I can't see you."

A SURE WAY.

Congressman Charles R. Davis of Minnesota relates that one afternoon a train on a Western railroad stopped at a small station, when one of the passengers, in looking over the place, found his gaze fixed upon an interesting sign. Hurrying to the side of the conductor, he eagerly inquired: "Do you think that I will have time to get a soda before the train starts?"

"Oh, yes," answered the conductor.

"But suppose," suggested the thirsty passenger, "that the train should go on without me?"

"We can easily fix that," promptly replied the conductor. "I will go along and have one with you."

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Box 25—Cluthe Co., 125 E. 23rd St., New York City

Motion Picture Boys.

(Continued From Page 17.)

chancing to look up and noticing the anxious expression on his friend's face, he continued: "Why, what ails you, Tom? Have you learned anything since you went off?"

"Only this, Wally," said the other, impressively. "Just back yonder it happens there's a place where you can see the road for at least two miles, because it makes a turn and juts out. And I just happened to glimpse a wagon drawn by two bay horses heading this way, with the team galloping like mad. Don't you recollect that the horses belonging to that wagon containing those camera men were bay in color? I'm afraid they've learned what we've done, and are coming to try and get possession of our films!"

Wally gave vent to an ejaculation, and started working faster than ever as tho he realized the gravity of the situation. Tom hovered over him, his soul in his troubled eyes, and from time to time he would raise his head to listen.

"There, I'm sure I heard the sound of wheels just then, when the breeze freshened up, Wally!" he exclaimed, trembling with emotion. "They must be getting terribly close by. Oh! Haven't you got it fixed yet?"

For answer Wally gave the crank a sudden turn. There was no response, and poor Tom groaned. Again did the confident Wally set himself to work, and for a second time without result.

"Three times for luck!" cried Wally, defiantly, and then, after the engine had started with a roar, he added, with a boisterous laugh: "There, didn't I tell you so, Tom? It's all right, so tumble aboard in a hurry, while I close up here."

"Be quick about it then, please, because there they come on the gallop!" cried Tom, as a wagon whirled around a bend in the road some two hundred yards away, with the driver using his whip mercilessly, and two other men waving their arms as if they might be human semaphores in action.

But Wally knew what he was about. He calmly finished his job, and afterward took his seat back of the steering wheel. Loud outcries arose from the rear, accompanied by the pounding of horses' hoofs on the hard road. But Wally made his start as tho nothing out of the way was the matter. Let those camera men shout until they grew black in the face, he had not the least intention of stopping to please them.

And so presently they were a mile away. No doubt the baffled men from the city studio, realizing that they had been finely left in the lurch, gave up all thought of further pursuit, and turned back to start on their own particular task, hoping in their envious hearts that some accident might happen whereby the precious film covering the bursting of the reservoir dam would come to grief, and never appear in front of a screen.

After its recent tricky behavior the engine acted very decently. Perhaps it was ashamed of its late actions and wished to make amends. However that might be, there was no further breakdown, and in due time, somewhere around nine that evening, the expedition arrived at Greenville.

The package of exposed films was deposited safely at Tom's home, and the story of their strange adventure told to an admiring audience. Then the boys considered the fact that they were both dead tired, and Wally went over home, after promising to drop around the first thing in the morning, when they could lay plans looking to a speedy visit to the big metropolis. In order to have the films developed under their own eyes, so they could guard against any accident.

When a little later on this scheme was carried out, the result was everything that the most ardent camera man could desire. Everybody who saw the pictures declared that they had no superior, and that the one who handled the camera end of the business was a genius of the first water.

If you have not as yet gazed on that thrilling scene where the great reservoir wall of apparently solid masonry gave way before the tremendous pressure of the impounded flood, and released the waters that sprang forth like a tiger leaping on its prey, then you have missed one of the most remarkable pictures ever shown; and it is to be hoped your town may soon be given the treat of seeing it shown.

The boys did not forget their promise to Alec, and he was on hand when the series of pictures featuring the broken dam was given in the Greenville playhouse for several evenings to crowded houses. Tom and Wally received all sorts of verbal bouquets on account of their wonderful success in the art; and as their royalties kept coming in from that "triumph of genius," as the two-reel exhibition was called in the posters announcing it, they soon had an imposing stock bank account.

They were already laying ambitious schemes for further ventures, and it can be set down as certain that Tom, in particular, will be heard from later on in his chosen field. Having followed the pair to the finish of their first effort to accomplish great things, and seen how splendidly they both acquitted themselves, there is nothing further to do now but to leave them with the reader.

Next week's Ledger will contain another splendid story for boys, entitled, "The Six Corners Boy; or, a Strike for Freedom," by Milford Merrill. It is full of struggle and adventure, and relates how a poor but daring boy won success by fighting for his rights. It is a dandy story. Read it sure.

The End.

Old Foes Afloat.

(Continued From Page 14.)

see the man. Named Loren F. Harding, is he? I wonder——"

After ten minutes talk with the mate of the Herman Hammond there was less to wonder about. Bosworth was in the presence of the man whose name and identity he had appropriated. It was a singular chapter in the succession of strange events since the Sea Laugh sailed, but, like most complications, seemed likely to work itself out ultimately.

In the present case the working out began promptly when the ship was at her pier in Rio. Bosworth, being acting chief of the vessel, saw conscientiously to the unloading. Captain Roxford, suffering from the same disease that had carried the crew of the Hammond to their end, was smitten with unusual lightness, and made steady progress toward complete recovery. His erratic sister retained outward sanity, and Albert indulged in no drugs.

The real Loren F. Harding was soon a well man, and his story was told. After once retiring from the sea he had shipped again, and thereby became enmeshed in the troubles of the Hammond. He and Bosworth exchanged confidences and became friends.

It was Bosworth who navigated the Sea Laugh on her return voyage, but Roxford lay in his stateroom, continuing his progress toward full health. He now knew who his chief mate was, but he and Albert had agreed to confess everything and clear the unfortunate's man's reputation.

All this came to pass, and Bosworth finally found himself exonerated even by that most fastidious of all censors, the law. When the last formality was over with, he turned his back upon his acquaintances in the Sea Laugh. He had seen enough of the Roxford family to feel that their absence was the most enjoyable gift they could give to him. Male and female, he was willing to know them no more.

With his good name fully restored, he turned again to the sea that was his foe in storm and stress, but his friend when bright skies sent their sunshine to the sails and decks that made up half his life.

The End.

His Offense.

Lord Lovat, the head of the famous Lovat Scouts, tells a good story in regard to a very much ruffled private who was under arrest for some offense. Lord Lovat inquired of the sergeant as to what his offense was.

"He's a very troublesome fellow, sir," the sergeant replied. "Got too much lip, goes out without leave, comes back when he likes, and gets drunk when he likes—just as if he was an officer."

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I AM FREE—YOU CAN BE FREE

My catarrh was filthy and loathsome. It made me ill. It dulled my mind. It undermined my health and was weakening my will. The hawking, coughing, spitting made me obnoxious to all, and my foul breath and disgusting habits made even my loved ones avoid me secretly. My delight in life was dulled and my faculties impaired. I knew that in time it would bring me to an untimely grave, because every moment of the day and night it was slowly yet surely sapping my vitality.

But I found a cure, and I am ready to tell you about it FREE. Write me promptly.

RISK JUST ONE CENT

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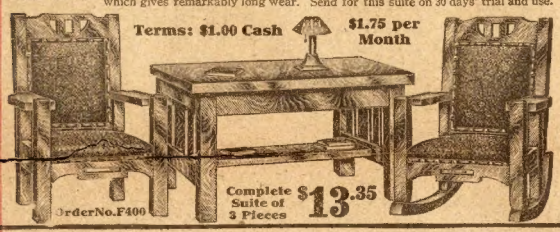

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